

Narration and dialogue in contemporary British and German-language drama (texts – translations – mise-en-scène)

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to undertake a comparative study of contemporary British and German-language playwriting, with an eye specifically towards possible reasons and solutions for the problematic situation of German-language playtexts in Britain. I will first conduct a stylistic analysis of a selection of British and German-language playwrights, focusing on the differences in representation of interiority through dialogue and narration. I will then introduce a phenomenological lens that will expand this literary analysis by looking at specific stagings of these texts, and at the use of gestures in particular. Tracing the performative implications of dialogue and narration in their relationship with gestures, I will suggest that while dialogue mostly requires metonymical gestures, the phenomenology of narration is better served by a more metaphoric use. This is followed by a chapter on translation, which will look at the specific problems and chances posed by narration and so-called 'postdramatic' plays in general. After these theoretical considerations, I will scrutinise my findings in a practical environment in two major steps. The first step is a comparative rehearsal observation of one German and one British director and their work with contemporary playtexts. My main question will be in how far the tendency towards dialogue in British plays and towards narration in German-language plays is matched by corresponding trends in the *directors'* formal language. Furthermore, I will contextualise the work of these two directors in the larger field of directing in their respective countries. The second and final step of my practical investigation will be an implementation and testing of the previous theses in two directing projects of my own. I will again focus on rehearsal methodologies, attempting to find out which methodologies are particularly useful for the rehearsal of narrative playtexts and thereby hoping to

formulate some first ideas for the specific requirements of German-language playtexts in a British context.

Dedicated to my sister, who helped to keep me positive and enthusiastic throughout the course of this work.

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Introduction

This thesis was born of a desire to address an imbalance. Contemporary British plays have consistently enjoyed significant success in German-speaking countries, from stagings of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (German premiere 1957, Austrian premiere 1958) to Edward Bond (especially Peter Stein's 1967 staging of *Saved*) and Howard Barker (repeatedly staged by Theater m.b.h. in Vienna in the Nineties). During the Nineties, the impact of British playwriting was particularly visible when the German municipal theatres started to develop "ein enges Netz der Autorenförderung nach englischem Vorbild" [a close-knit network for supporting playwrights after the British example] (Berger 2008). Thomas Ostermeier's productions of Sarah Kane, David Harrower and Mark Ravenhill at the Baracke of the Deutsches Theater played a particularly important role in the increased production and reception of British playwrights in German-speaking countries.

The popularity of these playwrights has endured until today, and they have been joined by Simon Stephens (recently selected again 'Foreign playwright of the year' by theatre magazine *Theater heute*, with his play *Three Kingdoms* also winning in the category 'Best Play'), Dennis Kelly and others in municipal theatres across the country. Sadly, the reverse is not the case. There have been some productions of contemporary German-language playwrights, most notably Marius von Mayenburg's *Fireface* [*Feuergesicht*] (Royal Court 2000), *The Ugly One* [*Der Häßliche*] (Royal Court 2007), *The Stone* [*Der Stein*] (Royal Court 2009), Dea Loher's *Innocence* [*Unschuld*] (Arcola Theatre 2010), *Tattoo* [*Tätowierung*] (Tristan Bates Theatre 2010), and *Land Without Words*

[*Land ohne Worte*] (Theatre 503 2009), Lukas Bärfuss' *The Sexual Neuroses of our Parents* [*Die sexuellen Neurosen unserer Eltern*] (Gate Theatre 2007), Anja Hilling's *Sense* [*Sinn*] (Southwark Playhouse 2009), and Roland Schimmelpfennig's *Arabian Night* [*Arabische Nacht*] (Soho Theatre 2002), *Push Up* [German title identical] (Royal Court 2002), *The Woman Before* [*Die Frau von früher*] (Royal Court 2005), or *The Golden Dragon* [*Der goldene Drache*] (Actors Touring Company and Drum Theatre Plymouth, in association with the Arcola Theatre, 2011). However, these have mostly been isolated incidences, often realised by smaller theatres or companies with a specific interest in European theatre. More importantly, there was a noticeable tendency to stage only those plays that could comfortably be slotted into a still largely realistic theatrical culture. Exceptions seemed to prove the rule: the single staging of Jelinek's work before 2012, *Services or They All Do It* [*Raststätte oder Sie machens alle*] (Gate Theatre 1996) was roundly dismissed as a failure by reviewers. I was interested to investigate the reasons for the continuing unpopularity of contemporary and formally experimental German-language plays and to address, if possible, approaches that could open up the British theatrical culture to these texts. In particular, I wanted to draw attention to stylistic, formal differences in texts and performances, since *institutional* differences between the two countries, for example in the organisation of the theatrical landscape, the support for playwrights and especially in funding have been more widely discussed. Since these institutional differences form the foundation and the framework for the formal differences analysed in this thesis, a brief overview will help to contextualise my findings, especially with regard to chapter 3, where I am going to take a closer look at directing methodologies in Great Britain and the German-speaking countries. Historically, theatre in the

German-speaking countries has been central to the civic, political, and cultural self-conception of their people. One of the terms frequently used in this context is Schiller's often misappropriated idea of theatre as a "moralische Anstalt" [moral institution].¹ In their introduction to *A History of German Theatre*, Maik Hamburger and Simon Williams summarise the influence of this idea:

Perhaps the most distinctive stratum of German theatre as it organized itself in the late eighteenth century was its declared mission to nurture within its audience that uniquely German quality of *Bildung*, a concept that [...] was most completely developed by Weimar Classicism. It aimed to make audiences not only into better citizens but into complete human beings with a capacity to live with confidence, even serenity in a conflicted world; theatre has rarely been granted a more elevated function. (Hamburger and Williams 2008: 4)

This crucial link between theatre and *Bildung* has led to a highly subsidised theatre system. Rita Gerlach-March contrasts this system with the British system, which combines smaller state subsidies with a larger commercial orientation:

In einem Spektrum, an dessen einen Pol ein staatlich subventionierter kultureller Sektor kontinentaleuropäischer Prägung steht und an dessen Gegenpol der fast ausnahmslos dem privaten Sektor und individuellem, karitativem Engagement überlassene Kulturbereich der Vereinigten Staaten, liegt Großbritannien innerhalb Europas am weitesten von Deutschland entfernt.

¹ 'Die Schaubühne, als eine moralische Anstalt betrachtet' is the more commonly known title his speech 'Was kann eine gute stehende Schaubühne eigentlich wirken?' received when re-published in 1802. (Cp. Schiller 2005: 84-97 for the speech and 598 for the variant title).

[In Europe, Great Britain is furthest from Germany in a spectrum in which one pole is defined by a cultural sector of a continental European character subsidized by the state and the other by the cultural sphere of the United States which is nearly exclusively left to the private sector and individual charitable initiative.] (Gerlach-March 2011: 17).

The result of these different systems of funding is a different purpose. Whereas theatres in Great Britain emphasise an orientation towards audience demand and economic management, the German-speaking countries have a stronger artistic focus that allows for greater experimentation (cp. *ibid*: 65). David Barnett summarises the importance of this economic independence for the German theatre system:

The freedom to play and the virtual detachment of theatres from the economy in the years after the fall of the Berlin Wall promoted an approach to making theatre that included the director, the audience, *and* the playwright in equally radical measure. (Barnett 2008a: 331)

On the other hand, it has to be mentioned that British theatre excels in the production of contemporary plays in spite of lower state subsidies. While there are at least four major subsidised theatres solely dedicated to the production of new plays in London (Soho Theatre, Royal Court Theatre, Hampstead Theatre, Bush Theatre)², the theatres in the German-speaking countries are largely so-called 'Dreispartenhäuser' [triple genre house] which produce opera, dance and a large range of classical and contemporary drama. Amongst the municipal theatres, there is only one subsidised New Writing theatre, the Schauspielhaus Wien. Gerlach-March explains this difference through a British cultural policy that specifically dedicates subsidies to the development of new plays (cp.

² The Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh would be an important example for New Writing Theatres outside London.

Gerlach-March 2011: 293). These cultural and material conditions will form the background for my subsequent analysis of the *formal* differences between Great Britain and the German-speaking countries. I will return to it in my historical comparison of the role of the director in both countries in chapter 3.

This dissertation aims to provide a selective comparative study of contemporary plays in Great Britain and the German-speaking countries, filling at least one gap in a larger comparative examination of both theatrical cultures. This topic has been largely neglected up to now, with the exception of some articles, for example those by David Barnett (“‘I’ve been told ... that the play is far too German’: The Interplay of Institution and Dramaturgy in Shaping British Reactions to German Theatre”), Egon Tiedje (‘Unterschiede der Theaterästhetik in England und Deutschland: Professionelle Selbstbilder und Theatralische Praxis’), Michael Raab (‘Patrick Marbers Closer in London und München’), and Anselm Heinrich’s more historically oriented studies (for example, *Entertainment. Propaganda. Education. Regional Theatre in Germany and Britain between 1918 and 1945*). I wanted to find out where the aesthetic differences and similarities between British and German-language theatre lie, and how these can be put into a creative dialogue that enriches both of these theatrical cultures. When speaking about ‘British’ theatre, I consciously elide possible differences between the theatrical cultures of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland in favour of what they have in common. The area of my investigation is delineated by “Sprachgrenzen, nicht [...] politischen Ländergrenzen” [linguistic and not by political national boundaries] (Poschmann 1997: 5). This parallels my combination of German, Austrian and Swiss-German theatre under the heading of ‘German-language’. Both within the British and the German-speaking theatre, professionals such as playwrights, actors, and

directors move freely across borders, where they share a common linguistic and aesthetic history.

This thesis undertakes a comparative analysis with an emphasis on the German-language texts and performances in order to address the perceived misbalance. It takes into consideration not only the plays themselves, but also their translation and mise-en-scène. Nothing is written in isolation; Gerda Poschmann speaks of the now commonly acknowledged “Erkenntnis der dialektischen Verschränkung von Dramatik und theatraler Praxis” [realisation of the dialectic interconnection between dramatic writing and theatrical practice] (Poschmann 1997: 5). Each playtext is also a specific reaction to the staging traditions of the culture it is written in, even if written in opposition to it, and each mise-en-scène similarly reacts to the dramatic texts it is confronted with. An analysis of just the text or just the performance is liable to forget this crucial mutual influence, thus turning its objects into artefacts disconnected from their social, historical, and cultural context. Therefore, I believe that a pairing of text and performance analysis allows for a more thorough comparison by bridging existing differences between drama and performance research. It will also help to understand the difficulties often met by German-language plays in Britain by drawing our attention to a gap in rehearsal and performance methodologies that are able to engage with the specific formal features of these texts.

My analysis of both texts and performances is based on an understanding of realism as the stylistically and formally diverse range of representation of one or several worlds. In order to trace different forms of realism, I will introduce the categories of dramatic realism and theatrical realism as formulated by Jon Erickson. Their overlap is already indicated by the shared

word 'realism': both are models of representation of reality, and any differentiation can only be heuristic. However, such a heuristic differentiation will be useful in order to identify tendencies in the way dramatic and theatrical realism select and combine different modes of representation of reality. In order to account for these representational modes on which dramatic and theatrical realism draw, I will make use of Aristotle's subdivision of a given reality into the aspects of actuality (what a person or thing is in each moment) and potentiality (the simultaneous inherent potential to be something else). Aristotle employs these categories for an analysis of reality itself, yet my focus will lie on their activation for an analysis of the representation of reality. Like dramatic and theatrical realism, actuality and potentiality form part of a continuum and are never clearly separated: there can only be a greater or lesser emphasis on one mode or the other in each moment of representation. Dramatic realism tends to base its model of reality more on the aspect of actuality, where action is interpreted as the full realisation of a person's or a thing's 'true self'. Consequently, the end result in which an action reveals itself is more important than the process that led to it. Aspects of such a process which contain the potential of other outcomes remain present, but dramatic realism generally employs its techniques to conceal them. Theatrical realism, in contrast, aims to reveal existing potentialities as part of its representational strategy. The mode of actuality is acknowledged, but often relegated to a lesser position in an attempt to reveal processes and the way they highlight the co-existence of several other worlds as models of reality. In my detailed analysis of dramatic and theatrical realism in chapter 1, I will not conflate actuality with dramatic realism and potentiality with theatrical realism, but rather trace the fluctuating interpenetration of these modes of reality in each form of representation. Within

these questions of representation, I will specifically concentrate on the aspect of different forms of representation of interiority. For the purposes of my investigation, I will propose a phenomenological understanding of interiority in the tradition of Merleau-Ponty as the complex, sometimes even contradictory collection of lived experience, “the life of thought, the life of the heart, the life of dream and memory” (Johnson 1999: 25).³ It is a way of thinking about oneself that is in itself already a form of representation. A theatre that engages with the *conditio humana* is concerned with the second order representation of this inner life. Due to its intangible nature, it is often with regard to the representation of interiority that the different emphases on actuality and potentiality emerge most strongly.

The combination of dialogue with distinct narrative passages of various lengths as the one of the key formal feature that distinguishes the representation of interiority in contemporary German-language playtexts from their British counterparts. I formulated this hypothesis on the basis of my observation of the different style and use of stage directions in the respective countries. There is a tendency in the German-language plays to blur the boundary between stage directions and spoken text, for example through the lack of typographic distinction or the introduction of a subjective voice that expands the text of the stage directions beyond the purely functional to include impressions, emotions, and personal observations. The result is the introduction of a narratorial voice into the hitherto closed framework of the dramatic fiction and the construction and exploration of different and often multiple versions of interiority that move beyond the traditional dramatic concept of ‘character’. In

³ I will also briefly consider how recent discoveries in cognitive science further strengthen such a phenomenological approach which sees body and mind as one, for example as summarised by Bruce McConachie in his book *Theatre & Mind*.

trying to formulate an underlying principle for these tendencies, I adopted the concept of narration, which allowed me to account for a range of stylistic features that the designation of 'stage direction' no longer sufficiently addressed. Narration has been an important formal feature in German drama since Brecht's Epic Theatre, and I will investigate his theories on the topic as one of the main bases for contemporary forms of narration. With regard to these, Poschmann points out that there is a "zunehmende Monologisierung der dramatischen Form" [increased monologisation of the dramatic form] (Poschmann 1997: 229) and quotes Bernd Balzer's statement that the monologue has become the "dramatische [...] Grundstruktur der Gegenwart" (cit. in: ibid: 229). Since there is "keine pure Innerlichkeit und [...] keine pure Äußerlichkeit", [no pure interiority and [...] no pure exteriority], narration presents texts "welche die Verbindungen herstellen" [which create the connections] and creates "einen Erzählraum" [a space of storytelling] (Kluge cit. in: Storr 2009: 42). Gérard Genette's narratological tools, especially with regard to the aspects of narration and focalization, will help me to analyse how narration in drama can work. The concept of 'dialogue' then suggested itself as the heuristic opposite of narration and an apt description of a use of language in playtexts that differed from the more prose-like passages I called 'narration'. For Szondi, the dialogue "im echten Drama [ist] der gemeinsame Raum, in dem die Innerlichkeit der dramatis personae sich objektiviert" [in the real drama [is] the shared space, in which the interiority of the dramatis personae objectifies itself] (Szondi 1963: 87). It is this "shared space" of an objectified interiority that the introduction of narration destabilises. My differentiation between narration and dialogue also parallels the "Zersetzung des Dialogs" [decomposition of dialogue] and the development of the "Modell der Ansprache" [model of direct

address] identified by Lehmann (Lehmann 2008: 45) There are, of course, other differences between German-language and British texts that are also related to the representation of interiority, such as the presence or lack of speech headers to identify speakers or a non-linear montage of texts that fragments notions of individuality. However, the concepts of narration and dialogue will hopefully identify a deep structure that will provide us with a useful heuristic framework to which some or all of these aspects can be related. We will see that narration is one possible unifying way to understand such diverse phenomena as poetic stage directions, the introduction of a narratorial voice, and the contrasting montage of texts. Poschmann describes such a move towards a more open and fragmented representation of interiority through narration in her analysis of Marlene Streeruwitz' texts: "die sprachliche Formulierung der Regieanweisungen [weist] häufig auf die Schwerpunktverlagerung von der Darstellungs- zur Wirkungsästhetik hin" [the linguistic formulation of the stage direction often points towards a change of emphasis from an aesthetic of representation to an aesthetic of impression] (Poschmann 1997: 157). Moreover, the concepts of both narration and dialogue specify a crucial nexus between text and performance in which the communication of interiority is realised and consequently will allow me to analyse different relationships between the two. It will be seen that most of the playtexts analysed in this thesis are formal hybrids, or what Poschmann defines as "Texte, die als Mischformen formal dramatische mit nichtdramatischen Elementen kombinieren" [texts, which are hybrid forms that combine dramatic with nondramatic elements] (ibid: 55-56). Hence, what we encounter is mostly a fluid blend of dialogic and narrative elements whose interaction we have to consider in our analysis.

My choice of playwrights was guided by these two analytic foci on interiority and the formal complex of dialogue and narration. For the German-language side, I have chosen Dea Loher, Roland Schimmelpfennig, Ewald Palmetshofer, Anja Hilling and Elfriede Jelinek as playwrights whose texts provide a wide scope of different forms of narration, ranging from occasional but crucial instances of breakdown of dialogue in Loher and Hilling to its nearly complete disappearance in Jelinek. Additionally, my choice also opens up the span of three generations of dramatic writing. I will focus on work written after 1990, since this period in particular exemplifies “eine Wiederkehr des Textes” [a return of the text] (Lehmann 2008: 159) which is “formally structured” (Haas 2008: 88), thereby creating a rich side-by-side of dialogic and narrative elements. The British playwrights that will form the focus of this thesis are Rebecca Lenkiewicz, Alexi Kaye Campbell, and Simon Stephens. Like the German-language playwrights, all three have produced significant work in the period starting in 1990. Their writing will help to exemplify the dialogic trends in British theatre culture, but also includes important instances of narration to demonstrate that this trend is by no means ‘pure’. Finally, both the German-language and the British examples include a range of plays that have been produced in the other country. Consequently, these writers offer a particularly interesting point of investigation when it comes to questions of cultural exchange. In the first part of my thesis, I will draw out the the different forms through which narration and dialogue construct the notion of interiority in the texts themselves, following up a general overview of each playwright’s work with a more detailed analysis of one of their plays. In particular, I will be looking at how dialogue and narration construct interiority, demonstrating how Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological notion of ‘in-betweenness’ can help us to understand

how interiority is represented in narration on stage. The increased phenomenological understanding of interiority as present in the texts also has important practical implications for the staging of dialogue and narration. In my discussion of the relationship between text and gesture in dialogic and narrative text, I will argue that each of these textual forms favours a different use of gestures, one more metonymical, the other more metaphoric. In my definition of metonymical and metaphorical gestures, I will draw particularly on Roman Jakobson's differentiation which positions the metonymical in a single unified world (thereby aligning it with dramatic realism) and the metaphorical in a plurality of worlds (and theatrical realism). Walter Benjamin's understanding of gestures as interruptions will further differentiate my thinking about gestures. I will employ performance analysis, drawing from examples of productions of the previously discussed playtexts, in order to elucidate my distinction between the two gestural modes of representation. I will also analyse Brecht's concept of *gestus* in order to see if and how it can be related to a metonymical and metaphoric analysis of gestures. One particular hypothesis I wish to investigate is in how far the understanding of metaphoric and metonymic relationships between text and gesture can help us to understand the scarcity of productions of contemporary German-language plays in Great Britain and the simultaneous co-existence of more dialogic British plays and more narrative German-language plays in the German-speaking countries.

The examination of metaphoric and metonymical gestures will already have opened up the field of the transposition of the texts. In the second part of my thesis, I will extend this investigation to questions of translation. This branching out into a different area of transposition will reveal how deep-seated some of the formal structures dominating British theatre are, and how they can

clash with the different formal structures of the German-language plays if these diverse cultural tendencies are not carefully negotiated. The methodologies of translation studies, especially the concepts of foreignisation and domestication, will help to illuminate the problematic influence of such corollaries of dialogue as fluidity and speakability on the transposition of German-language playtexts to Britain. As Lawrence Venuti has observed, there is a marked tendency in Anglo-American translation theory and practice towards domestication, i.e. the adoption of foreign text to one's own cultural norms. In its most extreme form, this extends to a relocation of the setting and a use of English names. Foreignisation, in contrast, aims to harness what is different about the foreign text (for example is sentence structure) in order to challenge the language into which one translates. The work of Walter Benjamin, Rudolf Pannwitz and Philip E. Lewis will form the background for my thoughts on this aspect. I aim to demonstrate how an understanding of the different performative functions and requirements of dialogue and narration necessitate corresponding different methodologies in translation and a greater (though not exclusive) emphasis on foreignisation. An understanding of dialogue and narration as well as of metaphoric and metonymic modes of representation as developed in the first chapter will help to formulate new approaches to translating playtexts. My enquiry into drama translation will be both theoretical and practical, drawing mainly on collaborative workshops that developed a translation of Jelinek's *Rechnitz* but also providing a brief contextualisation through the analysis of other translations of Jelinek's dramatic work.

The third part of my thesis will then analyse if it is possible to identify a hybridity of rehearsal methodologies in the practice of British and German directors that corresponds to the formal hybridity of the texts. I will compare

and contrast two rehearsal processes that I observed, one German (Sebastian Nübling's staging of Simon Stephen's *Three Kingdoms*) and one British (Ramin Gray's staging of Sarah Kane's *Crave*). Both productions are not 'pure' models of German-language and British directorial practices and rehearsal methodologies. Instead, their composition already presents cases of hybridity. In the production of *Three Kingdoms*, a German director is working on the text of a British writer, employing a cast from Germany, Britain, and Estonia. In the production of *Crave*, we encounter a British director who has worked extensively in the German-speaking countries as well as in Britain, who is well-versed in contemporary German-language plays and has even staged several of them in Britain. The very hybridity of these productions offers useful instances of confrontation and combination between dialogue and narration. The existence of this hybridity also points towards emerging trends for greater intercultural permeability in both countries. Through its emphasis on rehearsal methodologies, chapter 3 will move the investigation further along from a theoretical to a practical consideration. This will allow me a first testing of my theoretical considerations within a concrete production environment. Theory here begins to interact with the reality of making theatre.

I will conclude my thesis with my own practical examination of possible approaches to narration. This work will form the final step from theory to practice, and will continue and develop insights gained in the previous chapter. I will be able to test a variety of possible solutions to the problems I identified during the rehearsals for *Three Kingdoms* and *Crave*, albeit within the limitations of working with students within the framework of an educational institution. In addition, I will demonstrate the practical implementation of the theoretical thoughts developed in the first chapter, thereby modifying,

expanding and possibly discarding these considerations. Continuing my focus on rehearsal methodologies, the practical work on Hilling's *Black Beast Sorrow* [*Schwarzes Tier Traurigkeit*] and Schimmelpfennig's *End and Beginning* [*Ende und Anfang*] will allow me to develop acting exercises and directorial concepts that might provide intercultural meeting points between different methodologies. This final section will also chart the development of how my directorial language engages with issues of narration.

I hope that my thesis will throw a new light on the relationship between contemporary British and German-language theatre cultures. It will also make available for the first time – even if only in excerpts – several playtexts and critical studies for the English-speaking reader and will thus contribute to a better understanding of contemporary German-language texts and the theoretical and aesthetic environment in which they are written.⁴ The openness of British theatre to German-language theatre seems to be increasing over the last years. Jelinek's *Sports Play* [*Ein Sportstück*] (Just a Must Theatre 2012) has met considerable interest in the year of the Olympics, and the British drama publisher Oberon is planning the publication of collected volumes of Schimmelpfennig's and Loher's work. Within this context, my thesis could provide some methodological starting points for future practical and theoretical investigations of the staging of contemporary German-language theatre in Great Britain.

⁴ If not otherwise indicated, all translations in this thesis are my own.

CHAPTER 1: Reality and representation in the relationship between text and performance

Reality and representation

If we want to compare contemporary German-language and British theatre, both as theatrical writing and in performance, and consider a possible exchange of impulses and ideas between them, we have to perceive them as *representations of world*, and investigate the cultural specificities of these representations. The range of methodologies employed in this thesis is kept purposefully diverse in order to account for the broad spectrum of theatrical phenomena occurring in texts and performances. Such a combination of text and performance analysis seems necessary since it is in the interaction between the two where cultural specificities emerge most clearly. Certain formal norms and conventions in texts correspond to similar norms and conventions in the staging, and vice versa. There exists a dialectical relationship between playtexts and their theatrical realisation; texts are written for a particular theatrical culture (either in correspondence with or in opposition against its norms) and similarly acting and directing practices engage with the formal norms of the texts they are putting on stage. Since I want to investigate the difficulties that German-language playtexts encounter in Britain, a consideration of the nature of both playwriting and performance in that country is necessary to gain a sufficiently nuanced image of the cultural context. For example, an analysis focusing only on the formal differences between the British and the German-language playtexts would have been possible, but could not have accounted fully for problems the German-language texts encounter with regard

to issues of translation, acting techniques, or the methodology of the mise-en-scène.

The thread running through my investigation of British and German-language texts and performances will be a phenomenological approach to the concept of realism as the representation of world. I will open my investigation with Aristotle's separation of reality into the two interpenetrating aspects of actuality (what a person or thing is in each moment) and potentiality (the simultaneous inherent potential to be something else) in his *Metaphysics* since this allows me to move away from a monolithic view of reality (and realism) towards one that acknowledges that reality – and consequently its representations – comes in many shapes. For Aristotle, reality is both a given and exists independently of our perception. However, I will activate the concepts of actuality and potentiality as analytical tools for the *interpretation* of reality in performance. In this new context, they become processual: while we can posit reality is a given, our perception, interpretation and representation of it is always a construction. The question is: do different forms of realism construct the representation of reality in which either actuality or potentiality is emphasised to a greater degree, and if so, what are the formal features through which this is achieved? In order to answer these questions, I will introduce the heuristic categories of dramatic realism and theatrical realism. For the purposes of my thesis, these are more useful than the concepts of the dramatic and the postdramatic, since their terminology acknowledges a shared interest in the representation of world. They allow me to follow and categorise the different emphasis on actuality and potentiality in British and German-language drama: dramatic realism tends to conceal the nonetheless existing moments of potentiality and constructs its model of reality on the mode of actuality, i.e. of

actions that already display their own 'true' end; theatrical realism, whilst retaining moments of actuality, instead emphasises moments of potentiality in which it strives to provide glimpses of other possible models of reality. Like actuality and potentiality, dramatic realism and theatrical realism will prove to be part of a continuum, with areas of overlap and interpenetration.

The examination of the different forms of representation is a wide field. In order to focus my thesis further, I will concentrate specifically on one aspect of representation, that of interiority. In my introduction I have already offered a brief definition of interiority as the collection of a subject's lived experience. I will draw on phenomenology (supplemented by recent research in cognitive science) to develop an understanding of interiority as positioned in and in contact with its environment; it is not what separates us from the outside world, but what connects us. There exists a basic desire to know the other in human nature. Different forms of realism try to respond to this desire through different constructions and representations of the idea of interiority and subjecthood. I will strive to demonstrate how these ideas can again be aligned with the greater presence of either actuality or potentiality.

I will then identify the main formal features employed by dramatic and theatrical realism to give shape to these different ideas of interiority as dialogue on the one hand and narration on the other. Dramatic dialogue is predicated on the change of situation, favours the representation of actuality over that of potentiality, and enacts a perceived boundary between interiority and exteriority. It is positioned within a single model of reality whose wholeness it does not question fundamentally. Narration, in contrast, is able to construct several competing sketches of worlds, thus giving greater prominence to the aspect of

potentiality. Brecht demonstrates how narration allows registering not only actions (what is) but also what could have been. It is also able to blend interiority and exteriority to a greater degree than dialogue. I will provide examples of these different representations of interiority through dialogue and narration in my textual analysis of the British and German-language playtexts. Narratology, in particular Genette's categories of focalization, will provide the tools to differentiate the range of relationships between speakers and a figure's interiority.

At the end of chapter 1, I will move on to the performative side in order to investigate how dialogue and narration can be activated on stage. Parallel to my focus on form of the spoken words in the textual analysis, I will concentrate on the form of the gesture in my performance analysis. My aim is to examine the different relationships between gestures and words. This section will open with a definition of gesture as a "framed unity" (in Walter Benjamin's words; cp. Benjamin 1977: 521). I will then employ Roman Jakobson's definitions of metaphor and metonymy to differentiate between metonymic and metaphoric gestures. These categories will allow me to trace the stronger realisation of either actuality or potentiality in gestures. Metonymic gestures seem to be more closely aligned with actuality and often operate in conjunction with dialogue to create a single, whole model of reality. Metaphoric gestures in contrast appear to emphasise potentiality and often construct multiple parallel worlds through the leap of association they require; consequently, they are more closely connected with narration. Throughout, I will also examine how definite and exclusive these proposed connections (dramatic realism – dialogue – metonymic gesture on the one hand, theatrical realism – narration – metaphoric gesture on the other) are, and if there are not areas of overlap and interchange.

The overall investigation of the different forms of realism in Chapter 1 through the analysis of texts, gestures, and the interaction between both in performances will form the theoretical and methodological basis for the more practically oriented parts of this thesis.

Representation of reality: potentiality and act

A man delivers a speech from the edge of the stage. In the background, we see another man and a woman tearing each others' clothes off; they giggle. When the first man has finished his speech, the couple have drifted to the edge of the stage. The woman starts speaking:

Eine Frau um die Dreißig sitzt auf der Kante eines Doppelbetts. Neben dem Bett brennen zwei Nachttischlampen, die Deckenlampe ist aus. Neben der Frau ein Mann in Hosen und Unterhemd, keine Schuhe. Sie trägt nur noch Unterwäsche. Sie steht kurz davor, ihren Freund zu betrügen [...]. (Schimmelpfennig 2004a: 404)

[A woman around thirty is sitting at the edge of a double bed. Two bedside lamps are burning next to the bed, the ceiling light is off. Next to the woman there is a man in trousers and a vest, no shoes. She's just wearing her underwear. She is about to cheat on her boyfriend. [...]]

Shortly after the woman has said "she's about to cheat on her boyfriend", the man touches her naked shoulder, but she twists her body away from the touch. She is still laughing.

In this scene, taken from the performance of Roland Schimmelpfennig's *Vorher/Nachher* [*Before/Afterwards*] directed by Jürgen Gosch (world premiere, Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg 2003), the specific combination of words, gestures and the director's assignation of the text to the woman create a world

of possibilities. We have not seen the woman cheating yet, but her statement plants this possibility in our mind. Her actions, the half-naked cavorting with the man, both substantiate and undermine her statement. We do not know if he is her boyfriend, in which case she is projecting the act of betrayal into the future. The shrinking away from his touch would then embody her emotional turning away from her boyfriend – it is her avoidance, the lack of physical contact in this instance that will lead to a different act of physical contact in the future: the act of betrayal. However, if the man is not her boyfriend but her illicit lover, the turning away from the touch comes to mean the opposite, comes to undermine and put into doubt the act of betrayal we seem to be witnessing at the moment. In a different production, the text, not assigned by Schimmelpfennig to any particular speaker, could be attributed to the woman's boyfriend, to the man she is betraying, or to a narratorial figure. All three options would create complexities of meaning in the relationship between the speaker, his or her words, and the subjects of the scene described. What we see on stage is very real and at the same time very unstable in its meaning. The physical acts, the spoken words exist as clearly delineated signs on stage, but to what inner worlds they refer remains unresolved – this is the nature of the world represented (and created in the act of representation) in this performance.

It could be argued that especially some German-language texts, for example by Jelinek, no longer attempt to represent anything, no longer try to refer to a reality 'beyond' the stage. Indeed, Hans-Thies Lehmann postulates that postdramatic theatre is an "exploration of a 'beyond representation'" (Lehmann 2006: 144). Nevertheless, I maintain that in all of the instances that will be discussed in this thesis, "etwas Abwesendes wird durch etwas anderes gegenwärtig gemacht" [something absent is made present through something

else] (Werber 2000-2005: 265). Birgit Haas argues that “auch das postdramatische Theater [...] nicht ‘real’ [ist], sondern [...] auf dem Zeigen [beruht], auch wenn es dieses verneint. Anders gesagt: Noch in der antimimetischen Provokation kann Theater der Semiose nicht entgehen” [the postdramatic theatre is not ‘real’ either, but is based on showing, even if it denies it. To put it differently: theatre cannot escape semiosis even in its anti-mimetic provocation] (Haas 2007a: 30). Even if the playtexts and their performances no longer suggest the wholeness of a model of the world, they are still representation insofar as we understand the word to mean not an illusionistic imitation but as mimesis in the sense of a *process* of creation on stage in which “bleibt Spielraum für Erfindungen und für das Auftauchen von *realiter* nicht Präexistentem, das welteröffnende Kraft besitzt” [there remains room for invention and the appearance of something that does not pre-exist in reality, which has the power to open up worlds] (Girshausen 2005: 202). If the playtexts and their performances do not represent a single, ‘actual’ world, the very act of questioning forms of representation still bears within itself the potential for many *possible* worlds. “Nachgeahmt wird nicht die Natur wie sie ist, sondern [...] wie sie sein könnte” [What is represented is not the world as it is, but [...] how it could be] (Batteux in Werber 2000-2005: 270). “Ulf Eisele hat gezeigt, wie der Realismus sich die Wirklichkeit, die er nachzuahmen vorgibt, erst erfindet” [Ulf Eisele has demonstrated how even realism first invents the reality that it pretends to imitate] (cit. in: ibid: 272). I will analyse in more detail the playwrights’ individual solutions to the problem of creating worlds later in this chapter.

My understanding of representation and mimesis thus focuses on the aspects of process and possibility, on their “distanzierenden und Wirklichkeit

schaffenden Kräfte” [power to create distance as well as reality]; representation is thus is “von naturalistischen Konnotationen befreit” [freed from naturalistic connotations] (Girshausen 2005: 206). It calls to mind the central paradox of mimesis as representation, which is never purely referential: “als Verweis auf das ihr gegenüber Andere erschließt Mimesis jeweils eine eigene Seinssphäre” [mimesis opens up its own sphere of being through its reference to that which is the Other vis-à-vis itself] (ibid: 202). Christian Horn underlines how “die Geschichte des Repräsentationsbegriffs” [the history of the term ‘representation’] is marked “teilweise von Koexistenz und wechselnder Dominanz” [partly by coexistence and partly by changing dominance] between its “Verweisfunktion” [referential function] and its “Inszenierung von Präsenz” [mise-en-scène of presence] (Horn 2005: 268). Consequently, I will identify different *forms* of representation, which emphasise either the aspect of reference or that of presence, whilst remaining aware that both remain inextricably related.

Philosophical definitions of ‘reality’, such as Aristotle’s in his *Metaphysics*, and their application to the theatrical situation will help to substantiate my definition of representation. Aristotle presents a complex and differentiated concept of reality that corresponds to my understanding of representation as engaging with presence and absence. I will focus on two aspects of reality in the *Metaphysics* – potentiality and act – that will serve as a tool in my investigation of how the playtexts and their performances conceptualise and negotiate the fluctuating relationship between the two different aspects of representation as both reference and presence. This will be particularly relevant when examining how the verbal and gestural forms of representation interrelate. If no unifying superordinate model of reality is

presupposed, each representational element on stage can assume its own form. This charges the way the director and the actors define and redefine the relationship of these forms throughout the performance with new significance.

The reality of the verbal and nonverbal elements on stage is always twofold. It is therefore possible to differentiate two 'modes' of reality. On the one hand there is the absent (referential) reality. In our example from *Vorher/Nachher*, this corresponds to the act of betrayal that could occur and that is invoked through the woman's statement "She's about to cheat on her boyfriend [...]". Holz employs Aristotle's terminology from Book IX (Θ) of the *Metaphysics* and calls this mode "Potenz (Möglichkeit)" [potentiality (possibility)] (Holz 2000-2005: 199). According to Aristotle,

every potency is at one and the same time a potency of the opposite [...]. That, then, which is capable of being may either be or not be; the same thing, then, is capable both of being and of not being. (Aristotle 1924: IX.8)

Potentiality is therefore defined by the simultaneity of different, even opposite, possible actualities: the woman in *Vorher/Nachher* could or could not cheat on her boyfriend. Agamben paraphrases two types of potentiality as distinguished by Aristotle: *existing* potential" (for example that of an architect to build) and "*generic* potential" (for example that of a child to learn) (cf. Agamben 1999: 179). Like Aristotle, my investigation will focus on the first type. When speaking about potentiality, I am therefore speaking about the potentiality "of acting or being acted on *well*" (Aristotle 1924: IX.1, my emphasis). In theatre, this is the potentiality for a meaning that is equally surprising and satisfying, a potentiality

for meaning that actually *exists* in and is circumscribed by the content and form of the text and the performance.

Holz, following Aristotle, contrasts the mode of potentiality with the material reality, which he calls “Akt (Wirklichkeit)” [act (actuality)] (Holz 2000-2005: 199).⁵ In *Vorher/Nachher* this is the performers’ presence on stage, the physical given of the woman’s twisting away. Aristotle underlines how actuality is not the opposite of potentiality, but can co-exist with it, “since, of that which is coming to be, some part must have come to be, and, of that which, in general, is changing, some part must have changed” (Aristotle 1924: IX.1). Actuality therefore “is the end, and it is for the sake of this that the potency [or potentiality, JP] is acquired” (ibid: IX.1). The original Greek term Aristotle uses is *entelecheia*, which also implies that the end constituted by actuality is complete and fulfilling, is the full realisation of a thing’s true self. These definitions show that potentiality and actuality interpenetrate each other – separation between them is purely heuristic. Moreover, it has to be emphasised that Aristotle’s two modes of reality are embedded in a larger argument on being *qua* being and the relationship between form and substance which I do not take into consideration for the purposes of this thesis. Instead, I focus on potentiality and actuality and their possible applicability to the theatrical situation as prompted by Agamben’s essay on gestures. For Agamben, the gesture is “eine Potenz, die nicht in den Akt übergeht, um sich in ihm zu erschöpfen, sondern als Potenz im Akt verbleibt” [a potentiality that does not pass over into the act to be depleted in it, but remains in the act as potentiality] (Agamben 1992: 106). The co-presence of

⁵ “Actuality” is a translation of the German “Wirklichkeit”, analogous to “act” (Akt) and following corresponding translations of Aristotle’s discussion of these concepts in his *Metaphysics*. Note however that the difference between “Realität” and “Wirklichkeit” is a “Differenz, die die romanischen Sprachen und das Englische in gleicher Weise nicht kennen” [a difference which the Romanic languages and English equally do not know] (Holz 2000-2005: 202).

the two modes of 'reality' corresponds to the central paradox of representation as defined above: "das Bild der Realität ist nur in der Realität des Bildes gegeben" [the image of reality is only given in the reality of the image] (Holz 2000-2005: 198). The audience's image of the communicated 'reality' always constitutes itself *in the field between* the poles of these two modes, and different forms of representation can be defined by configurations of this field, the relationship and balance between potentiality and act. Therefore, the relationship between potentiality and act in the process of a "Wirklichkeitskonstruktion" [construction of reality] (Werber 2000-2005: 272) in text and performance will form the basis of my thinking about representations of world in German-language and British theatre cultures. What I propose is a way to analyse the relationship between a specific philosophical understanding of reality and its representation in different forms of realism. In a "simple phänomenologische [...] Feststellung" [simple phenomenological [...] observation], reality is understood to be "gegenständliche Realität, d.h. solche, die nicht in subjektiver Setzung, sondern in objektiver Gegebenheit ihre Existenz hat" [concrete reality, i.e. one that exists not as a subjective positing but as an objective given] – in spite of "jeder erkenntnistheoretischen Verrenkung" [any epistemological twists] (Holz 2000-2005: 226). This definition of reality, however, does not exclude considerations about the processual nature of how we come to *understand* reality and construct our model or models of it. Holz' description of this relationship with regard to literature is equally applicable to the texts and performances of theatre:

Zwischen literarischer Fiktion und der mit ihr gemeinten Realität besteht eine metaphorische Entsprechung, in der sich der Sinn einer Geschichte als Realitätsgehalt erweist. Realität wird damit wieder als ein außerhalb

der literarischen Erfindung liegender Sachverhalt objektiviert und gegen die Beliebigkeit subjektiver Setzungen behauptet, aber ihre Brechung in der subjektiven Deutung als konstitutives Moment der Erscheinung, als welche Realität sich zeigt, in den Begriff und in die Produktionsweise des literarischen Werks mit aufgenommen.

[Between literary fiction and the reality it refers to there is a metaphorical equivalence in which the meaning of a story shows itself to be a degree of reality. In this way, reality is again objectified as a factual complex that lies outside literary invention and that is maintained against the arbitrariness of subjective positing. However, its [reality's] refraction in subjective interpretation is integrated into the concept and the mode of production of the literary work as a constitutive aspect of the shape in which reality shows itself.] (Holz 2000-2005: 224).

In my following analysis, I will focus on this aspect of subjective interpretation of reality through different forms of realism.

Dramatic and Postdramatic – Dramatic Realism and Theatrical Realism

Following on from my understanding of representation and reality as a continuum between potentiality on the one hand and actuality on the other, I am going to differentiate between 'theatrical realism' and 'dramatic realism' when discussing contemporary German-language and British plays and performances. These categories are introduced by Jon Erickson in his contribution to Postlewait and Davis' book *Theatricality*. They will be useful for my argument since they recognise the simultaneous co-presence of potentiality and actuality in their definition of 'realism'. Dramatic realism veers more towards the display of actuality and simultaneously tries to conceal the theatricality of

potentiality. Nonetheless, this concealment is never complete – there is no ‘suspension of disbelief’:

However we may be caught up in a naturalistic or realistic play in the theatre, it is not true that theatricality is not at work. In fact, a particular kind of theatricality is doing its work very well, one that facilitates absorption by the dramatic story. In other words, it is theatricality as mediating form, accepted as a convention that effaces itself in its very operations, which are nonetheless functioning in service to the dramatic material. (Erickson 2003: 156)

Dramatic realism is always a “*Modell des Realen*” [*model of reality*] (Lehmann 2008: 22, original emphasis) and consequently also employs stylisation, condensation, intensification and other ways of representing reality. The concealment of how this model is constructed has to be handled skilfully in order to be convincing. Erickson reminds us that even realism does not completely conceal its mechanisms of representation

in the best instances of dramatic realism, in which from *within* their dialogic narratives the character’s or even the play’s own ability to discern the truth or to recognize the paradoxes of the force of illusion in human life is questioned. Its discursive action becomes a relatively transparent *depiction* of the non-transparency of the terms of human cognition and belief. (ibid: 160-161)

Nonetheless, in questioning the conventional constructions of a model of reality, theatrical realism usually explores potentiality to a greater extent, yet remains a representation of the world insofar as it “concentrates on showing the reality of the apparatus of illusion” or “create[s] a self-conscious dialectical relation

between the form of presentation and the content, the matter that is represented" (ibid: 160).

Erickson acknowledges both modes to be part of a continuum: they are only two different versions of realism. He emphasises that "dramatic realism and theatricalism inhabit each other's domain in varying degrees; one could even say that neither could exist without the other" (ibid: 161). This corresponds to my understanding of the plays and performances at hand, differing in how they conceptualise representations of world. Erickson explains the advantages of such a fluid, non-binary definition:

Instead of claiming that there is something called "realism" which effaces the theatrical framework in performance, and its antithesis, which one could call "formalism" (although never called that by its adherents) or "deconstruction", perhaps it would be better to recognize that *each side* can be seen as a species of realism insofar as realism means the attempt to locate and present the truth of the situation, whether the situation refers to the dramatic material or to the theatrical frame. (ibid: 160)

The differentiation between dramatic and theatrical realism is one of degrees and usefully focuses on the amount of visibility or invisibility of the "theatrical framework" in a given playtext and its performance.

My use of the categories of theatrical and dramatic realism comes into possible conflict with another term that is commonly used to define and discuss much of contemporary German-language drama, namely that of the 'postdramatic' as defined by Hans-Thies Lehmann. My alternative terminology underlines that "das postdramatische Theater beileibe nicht das 'Paradigma' für

das Gegenwartstheater darstellt" [the postdramatic theatre is by no means the 'paradigm' for contemporary theatre] (Haas 2007a:11). Indeed, the expression is potentially problematic in that it seems to imply a dichotomy between the dramatic and the postdramatic. It becomes even more so when applied to the close analysis of playtexts. Lehmann mentions playtexts as relevant elements of postdramatic theatre ("the term 'text theatre' will turn out to mean a genuine and authentic variant of postdramatic theatre", Lehmann 2006: 17), yet the playtexts remain outside the focus of his study, which "[d]er Vielfalt neuer Schreibweisen [...] in keiner Weise gerecht werden [kann oder soll]" [cannot and is not intended to do justice to the variety of new forms of writing] (Lehmann 2008: 4). Gerda Poschmann has in turn used the concept of the postdramatic in her discussion of the "nicht mehr dramatische Theater text" [no longer dramatic playtexts] (Poschmann 1997, title). The notion of the postdramatic has often been used too narrowly to define playwrights in a binary, exclusive way contrary to Lehmann's original intention, and often with contradictory results. For example, Małgorzata Sugiera sees Dea Loher as a postdramatic author, while Haas defines her writing as dramatic (cf. Haas 2007b: 272). Haas recognises that the analysis of contemporary playtexts defies a dramatic-postdramatic binary:

Zugleich aber trägt das neue realistische Theater die ästhetische Tradition der Dekonstruktion in sich. Dies zeigt sich etwa daran, dass der neue Realismus nicht einfach in eine bürgerliche Dramatik zurückfällt. Vielmehr bindet Lohers Dramenästhetik das postmoderne Erbe in ihre Stücke ein, ohne dabei die postmoderne Ästhetik zu wiederholen.

[The new realistic theatre [in Germany] contains in itself the aesthetic 'tradition' of deconstruction. This can be seen for example in the fact that the new Realism does not simply fall back into a bourgeois dramatic art. Instead, the aesthetic of Loher's dramatic writing incorporated the postmodern inheritance into her plays without reproducing postmodern aesthetics.] (Haas 2007b: 274)

Lehmann in fact does not deny that the 'no longer dramatic texts' still continue to "retain[...] the dramatic dimension to different degrees" (Lehmann 2006: 18). However,

im postdramatischen Theater ist Realität ersetzt durch das sogenannte *TheatReale*: Dies bedeutet nichts anderes, als die Absolutsetzung des Präsenz der Performanz, die die Wirklichkeit durch einen Schockeffekt zu unterbrechen sucht.

in postdramatic theatre, the so-called 'theatReal' substitutes reality: this simply means the positioning of the presence of the performance as the absolute, which attempts to disrupt reality through a shock effect.](Haas 2007a: 28)

This rejection of a referential reality goes hand in hand with the problematic rejection of representation already discussed in the previous section. It is a rejection shared by both Lehmann and Poschmann, making the postdramatic a less than ideal category for my analysis. Poschmann, for example, limits representation unduly to the wholeness of fictional and illusionistic worlds, which she sees in conflict with our modern experience of the world, which, according to Rolf Schäfer, is shaped by the "Verlust eines allgemeinen Wirklichkeitsverständnisses" [loss of a common understanding of reality] (cit. in: Poschmann 1997: 24). Instead, she highlights how humanity "wird sich [...]"

seiner eigenen kognitiven Leistung bewußt, die erst zur Konstitution von Welt führen" [comes to realise its own cognitive abilities, which only lead to the constitution of world] (Poschmann 1997: 24), and juxtaposes this processual experience of reality with representation. As discussed above, representation does not need to exclude such a modern focus on the cognitive processes of constituting reality, as implied by Poschmann's definition of the postdramatic. Frei demonstrates how representation includes "de[n] Konflikt zwischen Wahrnehmung [...] und die Wahrnehmung übersteigender 'Welt'" [the conflict between perception [...] and the 'world' which exceeds perception] (Frei 2006: 27).

The German-speaking countries have a strong history of postdramatic performances stretching back to the late 1960s. As a result, the postdramatic began to exert an important influential as a paradigm also on playwriting, exemplified by the importance of Jelinek's plays in German-language theatre programmes of the last years. In contrast, mainstream British playwriting, whilst certainly engaging with postmodernist experimentations, has not been influenced by postdramatic performances in the country. In fact, a certain separation of experimental groups such as Forced Entertainment, and the New Writing industry of theatres such as the Soho Theatre, Hampstead Theatre, the Royal Court, the National, or the Bush Theatre can be identified. Instead, the British exploration of visceral realism or 'In-Yer-Face Theatre' itself gave a strong impulse to German writing away from the postdramatic after the "Krisen des Dramas" [crisis of drama], of which "die letzte epochale [...] ihren Höhepunkt Ende der 80er Jahre [erreichte]" [the last epochal one reached its peak at the end of the 80s], which Frei attributes to the dominance of performance art and "Regietheater" at that time (Frei 2006: 14). The result is a

blossoming of Poschmann's formal hybrids from the 1990s onwards – plays of theatrical realism with a strong postdramatic influence. Unlike 'pure' postdramatic theatre, which destabilises "ein Verständnis des Dramas als des Repräsentanten von Wirklichkeit" [an understanding of drama as the representative of reality], this "new drama" which partly resulted from this impact of British playwriting destabilises "ein Verständnis von Wirklichkeit selbst, nämlich in der Form, wie sie im Drama abgebildet wird" [an understanding of reality itself, namely in the *form* in which it is represented in drama] (Frei 2006: 27-28, my emphasis). The problem of the representation of reality enters the form *and* content of the playtexts in the way they self-consciously display the constructedness of their reality. My terminology of dramatic and theatrical realism will thus serve as an important tool in the analysis of the texts as an essential part of my thesis. In contrast to Poschmann, it acknowledges the continuity of representational elements even in formally highly experimental playtexts.

The texts that I will investigate mostly belong to the aforementioned category of hybrids – neither purely dramatic nor purely postdramatic. These texts continue to engage with the representation of world through a variety of strategies. Differentiating them along the lines of theatrical and dramatic realism openly acknowledges this hybridity. Poschmann herself identifies an often fluid mixture between different kinds of texts within a play by introducing a gradual scale from texts that use the dramatic form uncritically to those that use it critically and mixed forms to the 'pure' postdramatic texts (Poschmann 1997: 55-56). These formal hybrids dominate contemporary German-language plays and increasingly become a feature of British new writing. In fact, Poschmann's category of plays that use the dramatic form critically can be seen as just

another instance of hybridity. Her differentiation between Elfriede Jelinek's *Totenauerg* [*Death/Valley/Summit*] and *Wolken.Heim.* [*Clouds.Home*] illustrates this. Whereas she categorises the latter as a “nichtdramatischen Theatertext” [nondramatic playtext] (ibid: 57), she claims that the former is one of Jelinek's texts, “welche die dramatische Form – wenn auch kritisch – nutzen” [which use the dramatic form – albeit critically] (ibid: 57). The distinction is made purely on formal or even typological grounds: Jelinek identifies two main speakers in *Totenauerg* (Martin Heidegger and Hanna Arendt) and adds stage directions, whereas *Wolken.Heim.* is presented without these elements. The exact functional difference between the two playtexts, especially with regard to their performative qualities, remains unclear. Consequently, hybrid texts that engage with the representation of world in a critical way are much more common than Poschmann's four categories seem to imply. As Simone Schneider points out: “Jenseits des großen Weltenwurfs schärften die neuen [deutschsprachigen] Stücke den Blick auf die Vielfältigkeit der Welt” [Beyond a large blueprint for the world, new [German-language] plays focused on the multiplicity of the world] (cit. in: Frei 2006: 56). If this dominance of hybridity and the corresponding occurrence of postdramatic stylistic *moments* such as narrative passages instead of a full-blown postdramatic paradigm is indeed the case, the representation of worlds remains a valid concept to discuss the playtexts and their performances. Poschmann is correct in identifying a “Krise der Repräsentation” [crisis of representation] (Poschmann 1997: 23) and indeed the postdramatic stylistic moments always also encapsulate moments of epistemological doubt, of the “Zerfall von weltanschaulichen Gewißeiten” [disintegration of ideological securities] (Lehmann 2008: 88) and of representational uncertainty, yet the validity of the representational model re-

constitutes itself in the playtexts' continuous negotiation with this crisis where "der Mensch [sich] seiner eigenen kognitiven Leistung bewußt [wird], die erst zur Konstitution von Welt führen[humanity becomes conscious of its own cognitive effort; only this can lead to the constitution of world] (ibid: 24).

In spite of these caveats, the prevalence of the term 'postdramatic' will make it necessary to engage with it occasionally in the course of my argument. When doing so, I will use it not as an exclusive label, but will identify individual "postdramatic stylistic moments" in texts and performances. Lehmann himself emphasises the importance of this small-scale, case-by-case use of his concept:

When discussing postdramatic stylistic moments one could easily point out those that the new theatre shares with the traditional dramatic theatre. [...] In the end, it is only the constellation of elements that decides whether a stylistic moment is to be read in the context of a dramatic or postdramatic aesthetics. (Lehmann 2006: 24f)

These individual postdramatic stylistic moments and their frequency can then be related back to the concepts of theatrical and dramatic realism. They are like the anatomy of a play and thus allow a more detailed and precise juxtaposition of stylistic devices. Rather than having to make the judgment call if a play (or even a playwright) is 'dramatic' or 'postdramatic', the methodological openness of the postdramatic stylistic moments allows for consideration of the individual construction of each play and to engage with them as hybrids. These moments do not conform to a clearly-defined list of 'the' postdramatic, but have to be identified individually and in each context anew. I have decided to use the categories of 'theatrical realism' and 'dramatic realism' as the primary prism of my interpretation precisely because they indicate an overlap in the

representation of worlds through the shared word 'realism', as Jon Erickson has pointed out. The concept of the postdramatic serves as a supplementary rather than as a dominant mode of investigation, and is employed where it will further my argument. It "has [...] not given up on relating to the world", yet focuses on the aspect of potentiality in reality: the world of postdramatic theatre is "an essentially possible world, pregnant with potentiality" (Jürs-Munby 2006: 12). In my consideration of the plays and performances in question, I will especially draw on the postdramatic notion of the new equality of the text and the other elements of performance, of text that is "considered only as one element, one layer, or as a 'material' of the scenic creation, not as its master" (Lehmann 2006: 17). In contrast to Lehmann, however, I will re-focus the investigation of the equivalence between the verbal and the nonverbal back on the performance texts, thereby contributing to "die Verbindung von Dramen- und Theatertheorie in einer aufführungsbezogenen, dramaturgischen Analyse" [the alliance of drama theory and theatre theory in a performance-oriented dramaturgical analysis] (Poschmann 1997: 16) in my comparison of contemporary British and German-language theatre. The reference to theatrical and dramatic realism instead of the postdramatic and the analytical focus on the majority of hybrid playtexts will help to sharpen our awareness for the commonalities as well as for the differences between the two theatrical cultures.

Dialogue as action: concealing form as a construction of reality in British dramatic realism

Contemporary German-language and British drama differ in the *form* in which they conceptualise and shape reality as the relationship between potentiality

and act. Form is here understood as an organisation of textual elements on the one hand and performative ones on the other. The nature of this organisation is related to the representational strategies in the text or performance. Crucially, the relationship between the form of a text and the form of a performance is not uni-directional or prescriptive:

the written text/performance text relationship is not one of simple priority but a complex of reciprocal constraints constituting a powerful *intertextuality*. (Elam 2002: 188)

The form of theatrical texts can create “Leerstellen” [gaps] or “Implikationen” [implications] (Totzeva 1995: 296) to be filled by the performance:

Das dem Damentext eingeschriebene Potential theatraler Wirkungen [...] ist aus der Sicht intertextuelle Theorie als kontestierbare Norm aufzufassen, als dramatischer Vorwurf theatraler Kunst, die sich durchaus auch – und zwar legitimerweise! – im Widerspruch zu diesem artikulierend kann.

From the point of view of intertextual theory, the potential of theatrical effects inscribed in the dramatic text [...] is to be understood as a norm that can be contested, as the dramatic reproach of theatrical art; the latter can articulate itself by all means – and legitimately! – in contradiction to the former. (Höfele 1991: 19)

In my analysis of the formal aspects of dialogue and narration, I will understand them precisely as such “norms that can be contested”. Broadly speaking, the majority of British plays use a form that attempts to conceal itself and thus any foregrounding of reality as a construction. They create a model of reality that is

codified by theatrical conventions. Stephen Lacey provides a concise account of the main conventions operating within dramatic realism:

The intention to signify 'reality' rather than 'art' [...] was also registered in realist theatrical conventions, which, in the nineteenth century, were achieved out of a struggle to suppress the essentially artificial nature of theatre, its 'constructedness'. This occurs (it should be placed in the present tense, as this kind of theatre is still recognizably present) across the full range of theatrical elements: lighting (largely 'naturalised' into the action, pulled into the fictional world); set design (the space being constructed as a recognizable approximation of the actual environments in which the characters that inhabit the action might reasonably live – typically a 'box-set', representing the domestic interior of the bourgeois family, framed within the architecture of the proscenium arch, the dominant form of architecture for the theatres utilized by post-war realists in the West End); sound, costume and make-up are likewise successful to the degree to which they support the general illusion of a plausible social reality. Perhaps most important of all, theatre of this sort has required the development of an approach to acting that has emphasized not the technical skills of the actor, but the degree to which he/she can become submerged in the character he/she is playing, and thus conceal his/her reality as signifier.⁶ (Lacey 1995: 69-70)

There certainly is a range of British playwrights such as Caryl Churchill, Howard Barker or Simon Stephens who question these dramatic realist conventions in their texts. Barker for example proposes in his plays "a ferocious disorganisation of narrative, a literal tearing apart of the cause-and-effect logic conventionally applied to historical events" (Jones 2004: 464). However, if we

⁶ I will develop the question of acting tendencies in dramatic and theatrical realism further in the practical observations and projects of Chapter 3 and 4.

consider the use of dialogue as another of the dramatic realist conventions, its continued prevalence in British playwriting becomes noticeable. Dialogue rendered in a 'realistic' idiom contributes to the self-concealing tendencies of dramatic realism since it usually does not question the link between a speaker and his or her text. In dialogic plays, there are no 'text-bearers' like the figures we encounter in Jelinek's playtexts. The wide range of British writing presents instances of disruptions of the dialogic norm, for example Sarah Kane's *Crave* (which, however, retains some dialogic elements, as we will see in chapter 3), Martin Crimp's *Attempts on her life* or Howard Barker's *Slowly*. From the British playwrights that form the focus of my thesis, Simon Stephens frequently uses sections of narration in his plays. Yet even in the oeuvre of these playwrights, the dialogic form – even if not uncontested – remains hugely influential. Examples would be Kane's *Blasted*, *Cleansed* and *Phaedra's Love*, Crimp's *The Country*, Barker's *Blok/Eko* or *Hurts Given and Received*, or Stephens' *Motortown* or *Three Kingdoms*. The persistence of dramatic realism as a cultural norm has been remarked on by a range of British academics and theatre practitioners. Ruby Cohn states her "belief that the main tradition of recent British drama is that of realism" (Cohn 1991: 1). Twenty years later, this verdict still holds true. Aleks Sierz testifies a "hegemony of linear, realistic dramas" in England (Sierz 2011: 59) and draws our attention to the way "English realism prides itself on having no 'style' or 'aesthetic' that might get in the way of truth" (ibid: 18). David Lane also agrees that in spite of an increasing number of plays exploring theatrical realism, "the complaint remained that new writing was still lacking in theatricality and imagination, 'grounded by the twin ballast of naturalism and social realism'" (Lane 2010: 30). Jon Elsom explains that "the prevailing rules can be traced back to a compromise between

'naturalism' and the 'well-made-play', pioneered by Zola and Ibsen in the 1880s" (Elsom 1979: 35). According to Elsom, Zola argued that "plays could construct accurate models of life, for the purpose of analyzing the 'cause and effect' of human behavior" (ibid: 35). These early instances of dramatic realism were themselves quite radical, since they questioned the theatrical conventions of their time; they were "in rebellion against romantic situations and characterisation, and tried to put on the stage what he could verify by observing ordinary life". They used a new type of dialogue which "avoided poetic flights, and excessive sentiment, but which corresponded to 'the genuine, plain language spoken in real life'" (Styan 1981: 5). Only afterwards did dramatic realism itself turn into a set of theatrical conventions. Jacqueline Bolton locates the reason for the continuing influence of this model in the working conditions for playwrights in Great Britain; for example, in development programmes that "place particular emphasis upon those elements of dramatic writing that may be most easily codified and taught: character, dialogue and plot" (Bolton 2012a: 220). She also names the ubiquity of staged readings, where "the muscularity of a play has perforce to lie in the language" (ibid: 220), as another influential factor.

As the inheritor of the representational strategies of naturalism, the main emphasis of dramatic realism lies in the smooth development of a *logical* plot, or – in other words – a narrative that as a whole does not display its own constructedness but develops in such a way as to appear natural. Consequently, contemporary British drama continues to favour dialogue as a performative form of speech where an "intentionale Situationsveränderung" [intentional change of a situation] take place (Pfister 1977: 169): words become action, inherently linking cause and effect and thus seemingly closing the gap

between referential reality (potentiality) and material reality (act). Pfister therefore establishes “die Identität von Rede und Handlung” [the identity of speech and action] in dramatic dialogue (ibid: 169) and the corresponding dominance of the appellative function and how “die appellative Funktion von der dialogischen Sprechsituation abhängt und mit der Intensität des Partnerbezugs [...] zunimmt” [the appellative function depends on the dialogic situation of speech and increases with the intensity of reference to a partner [...]] (ibid: 158). Pirandello describes dramatic dialogue succinctly as “azione parlata”, “gesprochene Handlung” [spoken action] (cit. in: ibid: 24). Words as action are thus an example of a form of mimesis; “die Zeichen partizipieren [...] unmittelbar an den Energien des von ihnen Bezeichneten” [the signs immediately participate in the energies of that which they signify] (Girshausen 2005: 207). An example from Rebecca Lenkiewicz’s *Shoreditch Madonna* will help to illustrate this:

Michael	Sit on the mattress and I'll focus.
Nick	It's wet.
Michael	It's just rain
	[...]
	Talk to me.
Nick	What about?
Michael	Anything. Your mouth is just a hole now. Talk.

(Lenkiewicz 2005: 5-6)

Each utterance in this excerpt stands in a logical connection to a concrete action such as ‘sitting down’ or ‘not sitting down’, ‘focusing to think’, ‘talking’, etc, so much so that the utterance *is* the action. Aristotle defines action as “that

movement in which the end is present [...]. E.g. at the same time we are seeing and have seen, are understanding and have understood, are thinking and have thought [...]" (Aristotle 1924, IX.6). In the example above, each utterance already encapsulates its logically corresponding action and thus has its "end". Active dialogue as *form* therefore establishes a relationship between potentiality and act in which the potentiality of change encapsulated in the words is immediately realized in the action or "changes of situation" – potentiality and act in the majority of British drama are defined by their *synchrony* (Gleichzeitigkeit). We will see how the immediate realisation of potentiality in action in the dramatic dialogue is closely related to the notion of subtext when looking at the practice of 'actioning' in my observation of British rehearsal practices.

As the aim of dramatic realism is to conceal its processes of construction, it has always been focused more on content than on form: "Radical forms had to be abandoned in favour of radical content" (Jones 2004: 451). For Raymond Williams, this content is defined by the "secular, the contemporary and the socially extended" and is "consciously interpretative from a particular political viewpoint" (cit. in: Lacey 1995: 64-65) – a pithy summary of the basis of most British playwriting. The fundamental belief of dramatic realism in the ability to present truth is even present in such radical plays as Kane's *Blasted* or Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking*, which according to Liz Tomlin "demonstrated a continuing faith in the efficacy of theatre's ability to 'shock' its audience through a skilful representation of the 'real'" (Tomlin 2004: 506). Correspondingly, David Lane establishes that:

despite the claims that contemporary British drama from the late 1990s comprised an innovative new movement, she [Sanja Nikcevic] finds the plays 'lacked the usual criteria for this in not initiating new conventions of

staging' and showed a habitual use of 'realistic and naturalistic procedures'. (Lane 2010: 17)

The continuing use of the conventional dialogic form that I have indentified is one of the prime reasons for the playtexts' inability to "[initiate] new conventions of staging". It is telling that even plays that disrupt the self-concealing tendencies of dramatic realism often retain a basic dialogic structure. Caryl Churchill's *Blue Heart* can serve as a point in case. The first part, in which a father, a mother and an aunt are waiting for a woman to arrive home after years in Australia, employs a largely naturalistic dialogue:

LEWIS: Where is she?

BRIAN: You're not coming in here in that condition.

LEWIS: Where's my big sister? I want to give her a kiss.

BRIAN: You'll see her when you're sober. (Churchill 1997: 11)

The dialogue between Brian (the father) and Lewis (his son) enacts the conflict between the drunken Lewis trying to enter the room and his father trying to prevent this. There is one instance in the first part where words momentarily fail ("You don't sleem peased – you don't pleem seased –", *ibid*: 14), yet isolated as it is, this appears to be a slip of the tongue on part of the character. However, the overall structure begins to undermine the dialogic pattern (stable as it is if taken in isolation in each scene): Scenes are repeated again and again in variations as everything is "[r]eset to top" (*ibid*: 6). The introduction of these variations creates a careful layering of different potentialities that underlies the complete version of the dialogue once this is presented at the end of this section (*ibid*, 33-26). The second part, *Blue Kettle*, deals with a middle-aged man and his girlfriend who are involved in a con trick, making elderly women believe they are the man's long-lost mother. Here, the destabilisation initiated in

Heart's Desire begins to affect the dialogue itself. The words 'kettle' and 'blue' are substituted for other words in a sentence ("Kettle I blue I'm not kettle myself clear", *ibid*: 66) and finally even these words are fragmented ("Ket b tle die of?", *ibid*: 67). Communication through dialogue is no longer unproblematic. However, it still remains dialogic in that its main function continues to be affective and the stronger emphasis on actuality over potentiality remains largely intact. Punctuation, grammar and sentence structure still suggest how the characters act upon each other:

MRS PLANT: B dead?

DEREK: Ket k sorry.

MRS PLANT: B ket b tle you killed him. (*ibid*: 68)

In this example, Mrs Plant questions Derek, Derek apologises to her, and she accuses him of having committed murder. Whilst Churchill profoundly undermines the conventions of dramatic realism in *Blue Heart*, the dialogic pattern – even if problematised – remains operational and is overall not strongly colonised or replaced by narration, as in the German-language plays at hand. There are some small instances of narration in the form of Aunt Maisie's ruminations (*ibid*, 5-6, 23, 32-3), yet they are relatively brief and remain integrated into the overall dialogue.

British dramatic realism represents a consistent world on stage, *within which* tensions and contradictions are explored. Verbal and nonverbal elements of the performance usually complement each other and are synchronous, since they both have specific operative realms. Churchill, for example, calls in *Blue Heart* for a dialogic passage consisting only of the beginning of sentences: "as far as possible keep the movements that go with the part lines" (*ibid*: 17) Even

when words and movements contradict each other, for example, where dialogue and gestures carry opposing messages, they still refer to another level – the level of the fictional world – where this contradiction can be positioned within a larger pattern of meaning. As mentioned before, Lehmann emphasises that this is a “*Modell des Realen*” [model of reality] (Lehmann 2009: 22, original emphasis). It does not require “Vollständigkeit, nicht einmal Kontinuität der Repräsentation” [completeness, not even continuity of the representation] (ibid: 22): meaning can be fragmented, even contradictory. However, dramatic realist theatre “behauptet [...] durch seine Form Ganzheit” [claims [...] wholeness through its form] (ibid: 22). The model of reality offered by it is not unambiguous but is nonetheless governed by a set of principles that shape the model. This approach subscribes to an understanding of mimesis as

ein ganz bestimmtes Verhältnis der Repräsentation, das auf einer das Repräsentierte und den Repräsentanten gemeinsam einbeziehende Ordnung, einer Rang- und Werteskala, beruht.

[a very specific relationship of representation which depends on an order, a scale of rank and value incorporating both the thing represented and the person representing.] (Girshausen 2005: 203).

In other words: the mimesis of ‘dramatic realism’ is defined by a *stable* – but not necessarily unproblematic – relationship between potentiality and act, both in dialogue and gesture considered separately and in their relationship to each other. Reality and meaning are not one-dimensional in this kind of performance, and yet they work towards an authoritative meaning, as Roland Barthes recognised: “denotation is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so; under this illusion, it is ultimately no more than the *last* of the connotations (the one which seems both to establish and to close the reading)” (Barthes 1974: 9). A

prime example for this representation concealing its own constructedness in order to reach a model of reality (psychological or otherwise) that can be commonly accepted is Lessing's ideal of natural acting, which holds true for the main British tradition as well:

Als Ideal dieser natürlichen Darstellungsweise propagiert er die Nuance, wie sie z.B. von der Schauspielerin Hensel als sterbende Sara vorgeführt wird, die sich als letzte Geste mit einem kurzen, unscheinbaren Zucken der Finger in den Rock kneift.

[As the ideal of this natural representation he propagated the nuance, shown for example by the actress Hensel as the dying Sara [in Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson*], who, as her last gestures, pinches her skirt with a short, inconspicuous twitch.] (Kolesch 2005: 223)

The nuance – the dying Sara's pinching of her skirt – becomes the epitomic expression of the inward 'truth' of the decorum which defines her character. Barthes' statement about the nature of denotation serves as a useful reminder that the presence of an authoritative or dominant meaning does not result in just one meaning: other significations can and do occur, but are relegated to a secondary position by the overall mutual reinforcement of the signifiers within dramatic realism.

Narration highlighting form as the construction of a model of reality in German-language theatrical realism

In the German-speaking countries, following playwrights like Bertolt Brecht and Heiner Müller, and later, after the impact of postdramatic theatre or so-called 'director's theatre' (Regietheater) on playwriting, the notion of the 'wholeness' of

a model and with it of dramatic dialogue as an attempted concealment of form has been called into question. In his many texts on the Epic Theatre, Brecht, was one of the main theoreticians of a different, more fragmented form of writing. The form he was searching for was a heterogeneous one and re-emphasised the role of narration within playtexts:

Eine völlige Absonderung des epischen Theaters von einem dramatischen Theater war nie beabsichtigt, noch je versucht. Das epische Theater der zwanziger und dreißiger Jahre setzte sich gegen ein Theater, das ein episches Element als Widerspruch in sich nicht mehr duldet, und stellte wieder den älteren Zustand her, in dem das erzählende Element – Form hin, Form her – überwiegt.

[A complete separation of the epic theatre from a dramatic theatre was never intended nor ever attempted. The epic theatre of the Twenties and Thirties opposed a theatre which did not allow the epic element as a contradiction within itself, and went back to the older situation, where the narrative element dominated, no matter what the form.] (Brecht 1993e: 176)

Brecht saw a form that integrated epic, narrative elements as one of the key elements towards a new kind of representation which allowed to criticise the world, to present it with all its contradictions and flaws instead of trying to conceal them. Heiner Müller continues the emphasis on form renewed by Brecht:

Zunächst gibt es einen Grundirrtum: Literaturgeschichte oder Kunstgeschichte wird in den Medien immer erst einmal als eine Geschichte von Inhalten verstanden und interpretiert. Das utopische Moment kann ja auch in der Form liegen oder in der Formulierung. Das

wird, glaube ich, übersehen. Die Theaterpraxis ist so, daß Inhalte transportiert werden. Es werden Mitteilungen gemacht mit Texten, es wird aber nicht der Text, die Form mitgeteilt. Die Stücke werden nur nach ihren Inhalten beurteilt [...].

[There is one basic error: the media understand and interpret the history of literature or art as a history of contents or treatment of contents first of all. But the utopian moment could also lie in the form or formulation. I think that is overlooked. Theatrical practice transports contents. It communicates through texts, but it does not communicate the text, the form. Plays are only judged on their content [...].] (cit. in: Poschmann 1997: X)

As we have seen, this criticism still holds true for most British plays, since their central aim is to create dramatic realism: form as structuring has to be made as invisible as possible. Of course, dialogue also remains an important feature in German-language plays. Especially Loher and Hilling operate with a dialogic structure that is then punctured by instances of narration. Schimmelpfennig's and Palmetshofer's plays also feature dialogue, but use narration more frequently (especially in *Trilogie der Tiere* [Trilogy of animals] and *faust hat hunger und verschluckt sich an einer grete* [faust is hungry and chokes on a grete]). Jelinek then increases the use of narration and only retains some fragments of dialogue. Overall, there is a marked tendency in German-language plays towards a theatrical realism that seeks to consciously display the processes of constructing reality and thereby destabilises "ein Verständnis von Wirklichkeit selbst, nämlich in der Form, wie sie im Drama abgebildet wird" [an understanding of reality itself, namely in the form in which it is represented in drama] (Frei 2006: 27-28). Brecht summarises his position concerning the

destabilisation of the representation of reality in his 1939-1941 notes for *Der Messingkauf*: “Wenn man sich gegen eine Verwirrung der Beschreibung wendet, entscheidet man sich nicht gegen eine Beschreibung der Verwirrung” [if you decide against the confusion of the description, you do not decide against the description of the confusion] (Brecht 1993g: 721). The playwrights at hand have often taken on board elements of Brecht’s Epic Theatre and developed them for their own ends (especially in the investigation of interiority, which was not central to Brecht’s agenda).⁷ As Birgit Haas has demonstrated, Dea Loher is especially influenced by Brecht (cf. Haas 2006: 14). Central for the theatrical realism of these playwrights is that “das ‘Natürliche’ [...] das Moment des *Auffälligen* bekommen [mußte]” [the natural had to receive the element of the conspicuous] (Brecht 1993f: 109). Haas and Frei discuss these plays under the heading of a “neuer Realismus” [new realism] (Haas 2007b: 274) which incorporates elements of the postdramatic into its form, as an influential trend in contemporary German-language playwriting: it emerges “dass sich neuerdings ein Trend zum Offenen im Geschlossenen abzeichnet” [that lately a trend towards open elements within a closed form is discernible] (Haas 2009a: 27) where a play “das Gros der Handlung kommentierend begleiten bzw. dominieren” [can accompany or even dominate the majority of the action with their comment] (ibid: 28). On the other hand David Barnett succinctly summarises the continuing importance of the theatrical: “it is [...] the German-language tradition that has displayed the most consistent will to experiment and the most sustained engagement with non- and anti-realistic dramaturgies in the face of the representational crises of recent decades” (Barnett 2008a: 331).

⁷ Cp. for example Steer 1968: 638-640

Theatrical realism often chooses *narration* in contrast to dialogue to do so. For the purposes of my argument, I understand narration as a condition where speech is no longer necessarily realised in action: unlike in dialogue, a figure employing narration has lost the ability “sich als Redende selbst dar[zustellen]” [to represent itself as a speaker] (Pfister 1977: 23). Instead, these figures have become narrators, often of their own selves. They are simultaneously distant from and identical with their own interiority. This corresponds to the enlarged understanding of mimesis and representation discussed above: what is ‘real’ in narration is “zunächst überhaupt nicht der erzählte Vorgang, sondern das Erzählen selbst” [firstly not necessarily the narrated event, but the act of narration itself] (Käte Friedmann cit. in: Schmid 2008: 1). Narration on stage therefore introduces an insecurity, a tentativeness into the act of representation. Brecht recognised this when he underlined the importance of the “Versuch” [experiment] for the representation of human beings:

Heute, wo das menschliche Wesen als ‘das Ensemble aller gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse’ aufgefaßt werden muß, ist die epische Form die einzige, die jene Prozesse fassen kann, welche einer Dramatik als Stoff eines umfassenden Weltbildes dienen. Auch der Mensch, und zwar als fleischlicher Mensch, ist nur mehr aus den Prozessen, in denen er und durch die er steht, erfaßbar. Die neue Dramatik muß methodisch den ‚Versuch‘ in ihrer Form unterbringen.

[The epic form is today, when we have to understand the human character as the ‘ensemble of all social relations’, the only form that can capture the processes which will serve dramatic writing

as the substance of a comprehensive conception of the world. The human being, precisely as a creature of flesh, can also only be knowable from the processes in which and through which he exists. New dramatic writing has to position the 'experiment' in its form in a methodological manner.] (Brecht 1993c: 67)

For Brecht, narration is a way to approach the representation of human nature not by pinning it down, but by circumscribing the opaque space in the midst of the forces that shape it.

Narratology commonly defines as narration only those texts that include “*Veränderungen*” [changes] (Schmid 2008: 2, original emphasis) of a situation. However, it has to be remembered that these changes can also be implied and are displayed only “durch Indizien oder Symptome des Beschreibens” [through clues or the symptoms of the description] (ibid: 8). These implied narrative structures are especially prevalent when narration is transposed to the stage, where the presence of the narrator and the accumulation of nonverbal codes alongside the narration constitute a rich field of such “clues” or “symptoms”. My use of the category of narration will therefore also be permissible for some passages that on the surface seem more descriptive. An example would be the text Gosch has spoken by the woman at the beginning of *Vorher/Nachher* excerpted earlier. The sentence “She’s about to cheat on her boyfriend [...]” still refers to an imminent event. But in contrast to its dialogic version, which could be, “I will cheat on you”, the potentiality of this sentence remains fully intact – we have seen that the action that follows it (her twitching away) might or might not be the realisation of the words through action.

The use of narration thus leads to an expansion of the concept of mimesis. An “Assoziationsfeld” [associative field] (Girshausen 2005: 207) has

here replaced the “Identitäts-Kriterium” [criterion of identity] or a “Übereinstimmung von Selbst und Welt” [correspondence of self and world] (ibid: 204). Unlike the model of mimesis to which dramatic realism adheres, theatrical realism does not presuppose that “man dem Exempel dispositionell schon gleich [ist]” [one already is dispositionally close to the model in order to reach true equivalence with it] – it does not constitute representation within the “Rahmen des Verallgemeinerbaren” [framework of generalisability] (ibid: 203). In other words, physical surface correspondence between the representation and the thing represented is no longer of primary importance: synchrony is replaced by asynchrony. The difference between words and gestures in theatrical realism opens up a potentiality that is not fully realised and thus annihilated in the act of the touch and the twisting away from this touch. Both the narration and the gesture are “eine Potenz, die nicht in den Akt übergeht, um sich in ihm zu erschöpfen, sondern als Potenz im Akt verbleibt und in ihm tanzt” [a potentiality that does not flow over into the act to be exhausted in it, but remains – as potentiality – within the act, dancing in it] (Agamben 1992: 106). Consequently, the representational modes of theatrical realism dissolve the synchrony, the fulfilment of potentiality in the act, into an asynchrony (Ungleichzeitigkeit) of potentiality and act. In my detailed analysis of the British and German-language texts and performances I will further investigate the difference between a logical (synchronous) and illogical (asynchronous) relationship between potentiality and act in dramatic and theatrical realism’s modes of representation.

Interiority and its communication in the different forms of representation of world

In my analysis of representations of world, I will focus in particular on how contemporary British and German-language plays and their performances represent the characters' interiority. I am aware of the potential problems raised in the binary between outer and inner implied by the term, and will draw upon Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to deconstruct a rigorous dichotomy between the two. Nonetheless, interiority remains a useful term for my analysis of theatrical texts and performances since it addresses the very problem of the relationship between person and world. For the same reason, it has remained – in its expanded and more fluid definition – a valid term for phenomenological philosophy: "behavior, the outward projection of internal possibilities, indicates something like a being-in-the-world" (Olkowski and Morley 1999: 4).

Girshausen points out that the representation of interiority is an aspect of mimesis that goes beyond a simplistic reproduction of surface reality:

Die menschliche Neugier ansprechend, verweist es [das mimetische Phänomen] als Ganzes auf jenseits des Äußerlichen liegende Dimensionen der Wirklichkeit, die dadurch der Wahrnehmung und der Vorstellung zugänglich werden.

[Addressing human curiosity, it [the mimetic phenomenon] as a whole refers to dimensions of reality beyond the external, which in this way become accessible to perception and imagination.](Girshausen 2005: 206)

I am interested in the different ways the use of dialogue and narration enable access to interiority. A common-sense understanding of interiority and

exteriority, already present in the dichotomy of the terminology, perceives them as two separate states. Dialogue enacts this boundary through its notion of subtext as “what lies beneath and around the text [...]: character, context, intention, background and situation” (Houseman 2008: 153).⁸ The characters’ interiority is very rarely directly verbalised, but has to be accessed through reading their exteriority: their gestures, movements, and last but not least their dialogue (as exteriorising, active language):

Devlin: I thought the work we are doing was of a spontaneous nature?

Michael: It is.

Devlin: So get me a fucking chair. Now.

Michael: We could get one for tomorrow.

Devlin: I would like one for tonight.

Michael: Let’s just forget filming, then. (Lenkiewicz 2005: 11)

The older artist, Devlin, is testing the younger artists, Michael, Nick, and Hodge, who are also present in the scene. Conflict is simmering under the surface, and accessible through Devlin’s request and its urgency (“for tonight”) as well as through Michael’s refusal. A performance of this passage would further exteriorise this conflict between the characters through their positioning in space, nervous or aggressive behaviour, etc. At no point has the audience direct access to the motives behind Devlin’s confrontational behaviour, nor to what he thinks about the three young artists he is about to hire for a film. His interiority remains hidden, but the structures of dramatic realism that posit the

⁸ I will explore the idea of subtext further in the rehearsal observations, as well as in my own practice.

wholeness of this model of reality allow the audience to form ideas of Devlin's inner life. These ideas are likely to be complex and can accommodate conflicting interpretations. Nonetheless, they refer to *one* model of reality that links exterior expressions to inner thoughts, feelings and memories. Dialogue operates largely without any direct verbalisation of interiority. Instead, it positions the inner life in the subtext and allows us to access it through complex processes of inference, passing from the exterior to the interior.

Contrary to this, narration dissolves the boundary between exteriority and interiority on the verbal as well as the physical level and thereby represents inner worlds through a phenomenological lens. Such a dissolution should caution us towards the spatial implication of the terminology:

There has been a pervasive fault in the philosophical use of the term *in* to construe the inside in a spatializing sense. Thereby we are led to think of consciousness, thought, word, and significance as located in a space or container, as "wine is in the jar". This is why it is always worth being reminded that in saying we are being-in the world we mean that we are "l'être *au* monde." We are not "l'être *dans* le monde," which might tempt us to search for our being in the room that contains us. (Johnson 1999: 29)

In deconstructing the idea of exteriority as the container and interiority as the content, phenomenology also challenges the hierarchies of dramatic realism, where form is subjugated to content. As we have seen, dramatic realism strives to conceal its constructedness, and thereby posits the form of its representation as an objective structure. Theatrical realism echoes Madison's awareness that "form belongs *at one and the same time* to the world (it is a structure) and to consciousness (it is a meaning)", as in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology

(Madison 1981: 150). Hence, theatrical realism and narration demonstrate form as both objective and subjective; “the sensible field cannot be reduced to the objective” (Lingis 1968: xlv). This leads us back to the aforementioned blending of exteriority and interiority, since the former is usually associated with objectivity and the latter with subjectivity. This distinction can no longer be upheld. Olkowski and Morely describe the alternative state of being as follows: “from the exteriority of matter, to the in-betweenness of life, to the interiority of mind, a continuum exists such that interior and exterior can no longer be separated into unique spheres” (Olkowski and Morley 1999: 5). Cognitive science confirms this rejection of “a Cartesian division between brain and body, thinking and feeling” and emphasises that the “mind is embodied” (McConachie 2013: 1): “the ways we think – our sense of self and the foundational concepts we use to perceive the world and other people in it – derive from the embeddedness of our bodies on planet earth” (ibid: 1-2). The same obviously also applies to acting. In all its forms, be it in dramatic or theatrical realist plays, “the mind and the body are intertwined and inseparable in the operations of empathy, emotion, and conceptual blending [...]” (ibid: 30).

Whereas dialogue tends to separate exteriority and interiority, narration as a form is more suited to express the phenomenological continuum. In Anja Hilling's *Schwarzes Tier Traurigkeit* [*Black Beast Sorrow*] for example, the poetic stage directions verbalised by the characters enact a fluid transitioning from exterior into interior perspective and back.⁹ If Martin becomes the narrator of his own self and tells the audience directly that “*vielleicht ist er das, der Moment, in dem die Liebe ausbricht*” (Hilling 2007 a: 19) [*maybe this is it, the moment he's overwhelmed with love*], we perceive the character from inside

⁹ I will investigate this in more detail in chapter 4, where Hilling's *Schwarzes Tier Traurigkeit* is one of the two texts for my practical projects.

and outside simultaneously as he becomes both seer and seen. According to Merleau-Ponty, this simultaneity is possible since “my body is made of the same flesh as the world” and “this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world *reflects* it, encroaches upon it and it encroaches upon the world” (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 248). Through the flesh as the realm of in-betweenness, there is “a ramification of my body and a ramification of the world and a correspondence between its inside and my outside, between my inside and its outside” (ibid: 136). When the messy flat in Roland Schimmelpfennig’s *Ende und Anfang* [*End and Beginning*] is described, the ‘world’ is as much objective exteriority as subjective introspection on the part of the (unspecified) speaker: “Fluffs, dropped pasta, a few eggshells, a few cigarette butts, spatters of fat, dried fluids: wine, milk, beer, juice, full bin bags –” (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 2). Both this description and Martin’s observation of himself in *Schwarzes Tier Traurigkeit* can be seen as “the culmination of subjectivity *and* the culmination of materiality” (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 248, my emphasis). The body exhibits a “double belongingness to the order of “object” and to the order or “subject”” (ibid: 137). Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the ‘flesh’ (*la chair*) therefore “is the name for the ontological hinge on which the outside passes over to the inside and the inside passes over to the outside” (Johnson 1999: 31). Merleau-Ponty explicitly links it to Aristotle’s potentiality as one aspect of reality: “it [the flesh] is a *pregnancy* of possibles” (cit. in: ibid). In blurring the boundaries between interiority and exteriority, and focusing our attention on the flesh as the realm of in-betweenness, narration manages to emphasise potentiality. The wholeness and relative clarity of the inferential relationship of exteriority and interiority are replaced by “a compound of the visible with the invisible” of “signification” and

the “opaque quale”¹⁰, existing in the here and now, and in itself” (Lingis 1968: xli). There is no longer one authoritative and objective represented model of the world, but many subjective versions that have a parallel and often juxtaposed existence in the characters’ words and gestures. Even the stage design is no longer objective, but deeply influenced by the characters’ subjective construction of worlds. Meaning remains possible, but is much more opaque since it exhibits itself in a multiplicity of potential meanings. We will see in my detailed analysis of the texts how narration is able to find a form for this notion of the flesh particularly in its ability to shift focalization. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty’s concepts will have a significant impact on my analysis of the performer’s attitude towards narration and gesture in chapter 3 (rehearsal observations).

Introduction to the British and German-language playwrights

I will provide a broad analytical overview how the German-language and British playwrights discussed in this thesis conceptualise the specific form through which they represent reality. The way narration and dialogue engage with questions of interiority – an aspect that will later be the focus of my textual analysis – will already be introduced in this preliminary overview. The aim is to provide the reader unfamiliar with their work a context in which to situate my later close reading and structural analysis of one specific play and its performance per playwright. My choice of playwrights is motivated by my investigation of the representation of interiority through dialogue and narration.

¹⁰ According to the OED: “*Philos.* a quality or property as perceived or experienced by a person”.

Consequently, their use of form plays an important role. Within contemporary German-language drama according to Engelhardt and Zagorski,

Sprache und Form bleiben ein wesentliches Erkennungsmerkmal vieler der ganz jungen Autoren [...] Das fällt auf, nachdem in den vergangenen Jahren eine Nähe zum Well-made Play erkennbar war, die in Stadttheater-Inszenierungen häufig eher schrill-komisch unterstrichen wurde als konterkariert.

[language and form remain a crucial distinguishing characteristic of many of the very young playwrights [...]. This is noticeable after the closeness to the well-made play during the last years, which was a high-pitched and comic performance underlined rather than opposed in many performances of the municipal theatres.] (Engelhardt and Zagorski 2008:

7)

It is experimentation with form outside the dramatic realist remit of dialogue and action that distinguishes contemporary German playwrights. While this has developed into the dominant trend since the 1990s, examples can of course be traced to playwrights who had been working before this date and have continued their writing. My analysis will draw on playwrights from three generations and with a very diverse range of forms to acknowledge this diversity of contemporary German-language plays. I will argue that all of them can be identified as theatrical realism, operating with a representation of worlds whose constructedness itself is highlighted. Within this, individual forms of representation of course vary widely and often question the possibility of representation itself. The plays of Dea Loher (*1964) and Anja Hilling (*1975) most clearly embody the realistic, representational aspect of theatrical realism. They employ elements of the dramatic form such as story, characters, and

dialogue, but problematise these through postdramatic stylistic moments of narration, fragmentation of individuality, and the use of choruses in order to display the process of constructing worlds on stage. These features become more prominent in the works of Roland Schimmelpfennig (*1967) and Ewald Palmetshofer (*1978), where the stories themselves become fragmented into multiple points of view, and narration and monologic forms of speaking dominate. The plays of Elfriede Jelinek (*1946) are situated the furthest towards the postdramatic end of the spectrum. In fact, many would question that there is any attempt at all towards representation or construction of worlds. Nonetheless, the category of theatrical realism remains useful for my argument also with regard to Jelinek. Antje Johanning argues that Jelinek's texts „sich Wirklichkeit an[eignen], indem sie sich bereits vorgeformter Wirklichkeitsaneignung, wie Literatur, Film und Fernsehen, bemächtigen. Sie spielen gerade mit den vorherrschenden Weisen der Welterzeugung“ [appropriate reality by using pre-formed appropriations of reality such as literature, film, and TV. They play with the dominant manners of creating worlds] (Johanning 2004: 75). Even though Jelinek's worlds are simulacra, secondary worlds dependent on other representations, they still participate in the act of representation. Her aim is comparable to that of the other authors discussed above: “die ‘Weisen der Welterzeugung’, ihre Funktion und ihr Funktionieren, offenzulegen” [to reveal these ‘manners of creating world’, their function and the way they function] (ibid: 75). The revelation of constructedness that is at the heart of theatrical realism also drives Jelinek's plays. Interiority is another potentially problematic feature with regard to her work. Particularly her later playtexts no longer present clearly delineated characters as the *loci* of interiority. Instead, her figures are text-bearers for the “surfaces or planes of

language”, which “consist of montages of playfully and deconstructively manipulated quotes [...] intermixed with what reads like the author’s own ‘voice’” (Jürs-Munby 2009: 46). The lack of speakers and her repeated use of “Wir” [We], for example in *Wolken.Heim.* and *Rechnitz* further point towards a “Verschwinden des Subjekts” [disappearance of the subject] and of the “Idee der (Post-)Moderne ‘J’est un autre’” [and of the idea of (post-)modernism ‘I am another’] (Johanning 2004). Linda DeMerit summarises: “Her figures reflect the impossibility of individuality, identity, and self-determination in contemporary society” (DeMerit 1998). This also has an important political dimension, since it questions the existence of an individually expressed and realised free will and thus the existence of the individual as a political entity. However, I will demonstrate how her plays remain concerned with the traces of interiority. They continually reconstitute interiority in the very act of questioning and deconstructing it. Jelinek herself is aware of this dialectical relationship and locates it in the actual performance and the director’s engagement with her texts. Speaking about director Jossi Wieler, she says

Die Absicht dieses einen Regisseurs ist, nicht nach dem Sinn von etwas zu fragen, das ein Autor beabsichtigt hat, aber trotzdem Personen und Sinn zu konstituieren, das heißt, Realität zu schaffen, die Realität erst wird indem man sie [...] ein zweites Mal betrachtet.

[It is not the aim of this one director to ask for the meaning of something intended by an author, but to constitute persons and meaning nonetheless, i.e. to create reality which only becomes reality by [...] looking at it a second time.] (Jelinek 2011c : 107)

Moreover, she also sees it as the task of the director “[d]ie Unterschiedlichkeit von Personen herzustellen” (ibid: 103) [to differentiate people]. The creation of

such a spectrum of human behaviour on stage is strongly linked to the construction of interiorities. Even though the creation of worlds and the representation of interiority are highly problematic in Jelinek's plays, the constant engagement with this problematic nature assures their presence, and thereby aligns her with the other playwrights I discuss in my thesis. Jelinek, Loher, Schimmelpfennig, Hilling and Palmetshofer all employ a range of specific formal techniques, such as dilution of the boundaries between narrative, dramatic, and poetic language; the use of 'epic' elements (including recurrent metatheatrical reflection); and a conscious challenge of the plurimedial performance through strong verbal concreteness.

In most contemporary British plays narration does not figure as strongly as a *formal* feature. Simon Stephens (*1971) presents a mixed case, with plays like *One Minute* and *Pornography* that are formally close to the German model (due to his interest in German writing and his experience of the German system) and more dialogic plays such as *Motortown* or *Three Kingdoms*. Alexi Kaye Campbell (*1966) is an example of a playwright working within the conventions of dialogue but testing its boundaries; for example, through the use of long monologic passages in *Apologia*. Of the three British playwrights I will discuss in my thesis, Rebecca Lenkiewicz (*1968), in her play *Shoreditch Madonna*, is closest to the 'pure' dialogic form.

In Schimmelpfennig's work, interiority is explored through and balanced by a strong tendency towards the use of myths and fairy-tales for the shaping of the story. He tells his stories of personal "fears and addictions" (Schimmelpfennig cit. In: Carstensen and Emmerling 2007: 232), his "description of failure" ((cit in: ibid:234) through such myths and canonical

stories as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Nordic myths (*Die Zwiefachen* [*The Doubled Ones*]), Arabian Nights (*Die arabische Nacht* [*Arabian Night*]), *Alice in Wonderland* (in the eponymous play), Persephone and Psyche (*Für eine bessere Welt* [*For a better world*]), *Paradise Lost* (*Trilogie der Tiere* [*Trilogy of animals*]) and so on. Haas identifies a “Nutzbarmachung des Mythos als eine Erzählung” [utilisation of the myth as a story] in the tradition of Sartre, in contrast to a postdramatic “Aufwertung eines irrationalen Mythosbegriffs” [valorisation of an irrational understanding of myth] (Haas 2007a: 60). Schimmelpfennig’s search for truth is both acutely personal and acutely ontological: his characters are trying to find out what makes them human – a feature that Schimmelpfennig shares with Hilling. Unlike Magical Realism, which Haas as well as Schimmelpfennig question as a useful category for this kind of form (cp. Carstensen 2007: 233-234), what we encounter is that “[n]icht die Realität wird magisch, sondern die Magie realistisch” [it is not reality that becomes magical, but magic that becomes realistic] (Haas 2007a: 61). Characters in Schimmelpfennig, like Vandermaster, possess magical powers (*Die Zwiefachen*), and many are transformed into various creatures, ranging from animals to trees (for example in *Aus den Städten in die Wälder, aus den Wäldern in die Städte* [*From the Cities into the Forests, from the Forests into the Cities*], or in *Ende und Anfang* [*End and Beginning*]). In all these instances, these transformations are used as prisms to re-evaluate the human figure, its behaviour and its interiority.

In Hilling’s early writing, this magical potential is also present, but implied in the characters’ metaphoric statements rather than realised on stage:

Ich schwamm in schwarzen Augen platsch platsch. / Wanderte über
Sehnen auf Armbergen. (Hilling 2004: 55)

[I swam in dark eyes, splish splash. / Walked across sinews the mountains of the arm.]

In *Sinn* [Sense] we witness a conversation with a ghost; in *Radio Rhapsodie* [Radio Rhapsody] the character of Suzanne merges with a coral. In all these cases, the boundaries between the exterior and the interior are dissolved and any notion of a unified subject broken down, not in an attempt to negate interiority, but in order to investigate and possibly reconstitute it. Hilling's focus on the individual is manifest in her exploration of subjectivity by showing a story from all characters' points of view, as in *Mein junges idiotisches Herz* [My young and foolish heart], a technique which Schimmelpfennig also employs (for example in *Die arabische Nacht*, *Vorher/Nachher*, *Push-up 1-3*), and which will come under greater scrutiny in the section on narration. Jelinek's playtexts parallel Schimmelpfennig's and Hilling's fragmentation of the unified subject and use of multiple viewpoints, often as far as the complete eradication of individual agency, through her use of intertexts. The language of her figures often slips into quotations, for example from Hölderlin (as in *Wolken.Heim.*), Heidegger (as in *Totenauberg*) or T.S. Eliot (as in *Rechnitz*). Like the use of myth, these intertexts function as a supra-individual counterbalance to moments of interiority, and are mainly responsible for the dissolution of dialogue: "Der Dialog findet nicht mehr zwischen Figuren statt, sondern zwischen den einzelnen Diskursfragmenten" [The dialogue no longer occurs between figures, but between the individual fragments of discourse] (Johanning 2004: 70). Consequently, the figures or text bearers are shown as a disparate assemblage and only exist in the act of speaking itself: "My characters live only insofar as they speak" (Jelinek cit. in: Bethman 2000: 65). The speakers are constantly shown in the act of trying out different, often borrowed interiorities. Their

transformation however is never as complete as in Schimmelpfennig or Hilling and thus do not partake in the 'magical' aspect that their work displays.

Simon Stephens shares more elements of Schimmelpfennig's and Hilling's magical transformations than of Jelinek's intertexts, and explicitly links this aspect of his writing to a European tradition of playwriting in which modern German-language drama features heavily. This developed through his work with the Actors Touring Company (ATC) and its director Gordon Anderson (AD 2001-2006). In the preface to *One Minute*, Stephens writes:

So we knew that we wanted to experiment with the traditional Anglo-American theatrical narrative form in which I was certainly deeply steeped. We wanted to take our lead from some of the contemporary European playwrights, Roland Schimmelpfennig, Bernard Marie Koltes, Franz Xavier [sic] Kroetz, Jon Fosse, David Guisellman [sic]" (Stephens 2003, Writer's Notes).

In his recent play, *Three Kingdoms* (commissioned as a co-production between the Lyric Hammersmith London, Kammerspiele Munich, and NO99 Tallinn), Detective Sergeant Ignatius Stone's young wife Caroline eerily resembles a prostitute and porn film actress named Vera, the victim of a brutal beheading (Stephens 2011a: 56). Towards the end of the play, logic becomes suspended and the surreal takes over as Ignatius Stone accompanies his German colleague Steffen Dresner to the bar "The Dragon" in Tallinn, in search for the mysterious White Bird who is supposedly the head of the porn and murder operations. In an increasingly bizarre scene, Dresner claims to be the White Bird. He also convinces Stone that an earlier scene with Stephanie Friedman in Hamburg – another look-alike of his wife – turned ugly when Stone started enacting some of the brutal sex scenes from the DVD with her. Until the end, it

remains unclear if this is actually true or not (ibid: 142-143). *Pornography* repeatedly has the stage direction “*Images of hell*” (Stephens 2009: 230), and in a disused room in St Pancras station, “people reckon they’ve seen Roman soldiers marching through the basement” (ibid: 234). In spite of these surreal or transformational moments, Stephens’ plays still lean more towards the realistic than the magical. Aleks Sierz claims that his “trademark is to write precisely and often lyrically about everyday hope, honesty, and humour as well as about brutality and despair” (Sierz 2006: 0’29-0’38). Most of Stephens plays, like *Port*, *Christmas*, *Motortown*, *Punk Rock*, and *Three Kingdoms* are written in a clipped vernacular and focus on the lives of lower-class characters and areas like Stockport, Manchester, or the urban areas of London, Hamburg, and Tallinn. To this extent, the world of *Pornography* as well as certain surreal aspects of *One Minute* and *Three Kingdoms* are exceptions in Stephens work inspired by his interaction with contemporary German theatre, for example through collaborations with director Sebastian Nübling.

A dialogic language patterned to suggest the vernacular is aimed at representing a commonly accepted model of social reality. In its brevity and roughness, it is recognisably a stylisation of everyday speech: it is not a simplistic imitation of ‘real’ spoken language (whatever that might be) but the creation of an artificial and artistic version of spoken language. Its main function is to point to a specific milieu and to provide according characterisations that allow us to position the characters within the model of reality sketched by the play. Lenkiewicz’s *Shoreditch Madonna* is already socio-geographically placed through its title, conjuring up associations of a bohemian, down-and-out world of art. This is reinforced throughout the play by shortened sentences, the dropping of parts of sentences, and colloquial expressions: “Christ. Shit. That’s brilliant.

Shit. Three times.” (Lenkiewicz 2005: 74). Special attention is given to the construction of the appearance ‘natural’, i.e. non-poetic, free-flowing rhythm of the utterance. Language in these plays can be problematic in its communicative function, but this is situated again on the level of the model of social reality and the function of language within it. The aesthetic and metalingual dimensions of language remain secondary. While this naturalisation of dialogue is also used by the German-language playwrights discussed here, they consciously juxtapose it with heightened poetic expressions to create an unresolved tension between externalised and internalised forms of expression. This increases our awareness of the inherent artificiality of vernacular in drama. Dea Loher, for example, sometimes employs phrases coloured by dialect:

Daß der Herrgott ihr einen Hautkrebs geschickt hat – (Loher 1998: 11).

[That the Lord has sent her skin cancer –]

There is a continuum from critical realists such as Franz Xaver Kroetz or Marieluise Fleißer to Loher, yet her use of dialect goes further and is employed only in specific instances. By juxtaposing different forms of language, theatrical realism is able to display the constructedness even of the vernacular and thus subsumes the representational strategies of dramatic realism into its own processual remit. The potentially dishonest quality of vernacular expression is most developed in Elfriede Jelinek’s *Rechnitz*. The occasional use of Austrian dialect (“Hiasln” [roughly: “to paint”], Jelinek 2009: 138) and colloquialisms (“Die Gäste beim Feste Druff” [“the guests at the act of hitting hard”, with a wordplay on “Fest” as “feast” or “hard”], *ibid*: 65) expresses in their mixture of warmth, provinciality, and latent aggression the refusal of this country to enter into any kind of communication about its Nazi past. Vernacular and dialect are no longer

predominantly markers of identification and proof of factuality but distance us from the characters *because* of its now perceivable over-familiarity. In Lenkiewicz's, Stephens' and Campbell's plays however, the use of rhythmically precise creations of sociolects and idiolects is aimed to engender recognition and identification, especially through its humoristic potential:

CHARLIE Aren't you a bit young for The Beatles Tommy?

TOMMY That doesn't matter.

IGNATIUS I would say you are. I would say you're far too young to like the Beatles. I would say your Mum's too young to like the Beatles Tommy. Crikey.

TOMMY It doesn't matter.

IGNATIUS No?

CHARLIE I hate the flipping Beatles.

TOMMY They wrote good songs. (Stephens 2011a: 5-6)

Eupemistic expressions such as "crikey" and "flipping" are employed to locate this scene firmly in Britain and to appeal to a humour that is perceived as quintessentially British. Similarly, Campbell uses American constructions such as "I was kind of nervous" in order to characterise Peter's American girlfriend Trudi (Campbell 2009: 9). As can be seen, it is partly this use of the vernacular through which the British playwrights attempt to assure a smooth communication between characters as well as between the stage and the audience.

In contemporary German-language drama on the other hand, communication breaks down on numerous occasions. In Palmetshofer's *faust*

hat hunger und verschluckt sich an einer grete [*faust is hungry and chokes on a Grete*]¹¹, the characters of Faust and Grete are never directly present on stage but are embodied by the other characters, a change of role typographically indicated by crossing out that character's name. This 'absent presence' in itself makes communication problematic, but even their placeholders fail to overcome their differences and find a common love:

~~Fritz~~ da haben sich ja zwei gefunden

~~Ines~~ da wollen zwei das Gleiche
was doch nicht das Selbe ist

[...]

~~Fritz~~ dass das die Liebe
nein, das ist sie nicht
das ist nur Sympathie
am Gleichen leiden
Was-nicht-ist

~~Ines~~ da haben sich ja zwei gefunden
du musst jetzt „nein“ sagen

sag ich

dreh mich um und geh zum Ismael (Palmetshofer 2009: 11)

~~Fritz~~ apparently they have found each other
apparently they want the same thing
which is not the same after all

[...]

~~Fritz~~ that is love

~~Ines~~

¹¹ With a wordplay on the name Grete and the homophone word 'Gräte' (fishbone).

no, it's not
it's only sympathy
suffering from the same thing
from what-is-not
~~hes~~ apparently they have found each other
now you have to say "no"
I say
turn around and walk over to Ismael]

Like their fictional counterparts, 'Faust' and 'Grete' separate, but in this modern version less because of a mephistophelian intervention and more due to the simple but nonetheless tragic fact of the incommunicability of their feelings and desires. Incommunicability is most fully developed in Jelinek's playtexts. In *Rechnitz*, the figures as messengers are constantly groping for the right expression:

Ein Wort, das dafür oft benutzt wird, ein andres fällt mir im Moment nicht ein. Als Bote sollte ich stets über mehrere Worte verfügen, die ich bereithalten müßte, aber die Worte sind ineinandergefügt und danach so verfugt worden, wie ich ja bereits berichtet habe, daß ich sie jetzt nicht mehr rauskriege.

[That word's often used for this, at the moment I cannot think of any others. As a messenger I should have several words at my disposal, which I should keep ready, but as I reported, the words are fitted together and then irredeemably grouted.] (Jelinek 2009: 96)

Jelinek's messengers, trapped in the here and now of their speeches, and their constant attempts to relate and explain can be seen as ironic inversions of the characters in Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel*; the play's title already points to

this intertextual connection. Whereas in Buñuel's film the servants have left, and the audience is confronted with their masters, in Rechnitz the servants are all that is left – the masters, who made the crucial decisions, are conspicuously absent.

The messengers' attempts to communicate the atrocities of Rechnitz, where approximately 180 Jewish forced labourers were killed at the end of the Second World War, are displayed in their very instability. The potentiality of communication and the actuality of its failure occur simultaneously without being mutually exclusive. Interiorities are constantly constructed only to be fragmented again, so that a new process of construction can begin. If truthful communication of interiority and of a single, stable reality remains impossible, representation of worlds is relocated, away from the result and towards the fluidity of open-ended attempts.

Paradoxically, the German-language playwrights often posit poetic and artificial language – at the other extreme of idiolect – as the only way of communication *because of* its highly personal, idiosyncratic, and inherently incommunicable nature. The worlds represented through poetic language are highly personal and yet not purely subjective; they exist in Merleau-Ponty's realm of the 'flesh', where world and body as well as objectivity and subjectivity become one. Jelinek highlights how this artificial language, even though it is not 'realistic', still has the potential for truth:

Die Figuren brüllen dauernd Wahrheiten aus sich heraus – und irgendwann entsteht dann vielleicht der Reiz, daß auch jemand denkt: Das kann so eigentlich nicht alles stimmen. Oder: Das ist eigentlich wahr, aber das sagt so niemand. Niemand im wirklichen Leben.

[The figures constantly shout out truths – and at some point this might make someone think: all this can't be true. Or: Maybe it is true, but nobody says it like this. Nobody in real life.] (cit. in: Johanning 2004: 67)

Jelinek always displays the fragility of poetic language, its potential for abuse, as well as its surviving potential for truth. When using a quotation from Euripides' *The Bacchae* in a translation she took "aus dem Netz" [from the internet] (Jelinek 2009: 205), she juxtaposes its pathos with her own bathos in order to avoid an idealisation of violence and any sense of an unavoidability of fate:

Maßloses Elend! Jammer, den kein Aug erträgt! O blutiger, mit unseliger Hand vollbrachter Mord! Ein Opfer ohnegleichen, Göttern hingestreckt, zu dessen Schmaus du ganz Rechnitz, ich übertreibe, halb Rechnitz?, na ja, einen Gutteil davon, aber nicht der beste, das steht fest, die eine Hälfte als Diener, die andre als andre Diener [...]. (ibid: 183).

[Repentance without measure, impossible to look on, murder by miserable hands committed! A fine sacrifice you've struck down for the divine ones, to summon me and the whole of Rechnitz to a feast! I exaggerate – half Rechnitz?, ok a large part of it, but not the best, that's for sure, half of it as servants, the other half as other servants [...].]

At the same time, she consciously uses the pathos of the poetic language in order to hint at the tragic dimensions of the event.¹² In his preface to a collection of Schimmelpfennig's plays, Peter Michalzik describes this use of poetic language in drama as "apodiktisch" [apodictic]: "Man kann die Sätze dieses

¹² Other quotations for *The Bacchae*, often rewritten to suit the particular need of the text, occur throughout *Rechnitz*, usually in relation to the massacre itself. In particular, Jelinek uses references to *The Bacchae* in order to align Countess Batthyány with the character of Agaue, who ends up ripping apart her son Pentheus in a frenzy induced by the god Dionysus (cp. for example, Jelinek 2009: 110, 113, 124). The countess' agency in the massacre is thus de-individualised and put in a larger context of atavistic human behaviour.

Stücks nicht in eine normale Sprache übersetzen” [It is impossible to translate the lines of this play [*Keine Arbeit für die junge Frau im Frühlingskleid* [*No work for the young woman in the spring dress*]] into normal speech] (Michalzik 2004: 8). In Schimmelpfennig’s plays, the characters’ language often develops an internal coherence outside rational logic and closer to association. To quote from the play mentioned by Michalzik:

Die amerikanischen Überlandpiloten zum Beispiel haben in ihren Aufzeichnungen immer wieder beschrieben, daß sie während wolkenloser Nächte oft das Gefühl hatten, daß die Lichter der Städte und Straßen, die über die Erde verstreuten Lichter Amerikas, aber auch die Europas und Asiens in mehr als nur zufälligen Konstellationen stehen.

[For example, American cross-country pilots have repeatedly recorded that during cloudless nights they often had the feeling that the connection between the lights of the cities and streets, between the lights of America strewn scattered across the earth, but also between those of Europe and Asia is more than just arbitrary.] (Schimmelpfennig 2004b: 103)

This statement by one of the characters has no bearing on the immediate situation (five unemployed actors have gone to the countryside), but rather is a philosophical reflection on the mysterious link between all human beings, in spite of all difficulties of communication. A poetic language that uses the images of light and streets to suggest an interconnectedness of things that surpasses our normal perception thus emerges from the “Sprachdreck” [linguistic detritus] of everyday speech as the true language of ideas (and thus of philosophy) like the phoenix from the ashes (Schimmelpfennig 2004b: 229).

We can perceive some instances of such poetic language in the British playwrights at hand. However, they do not have the same importance in the overall formal construction of the representation of reality, since they are introduced only in dialogically motivated situations. Hence, the older artist Devlin provides this self-description in conversation with the camera:

I have been severed from the art world like a dismembered limb. Skin still fluttering like pink ribbons as the leg is torn from the hip socket. [...] I have been living in the shadows. Chiaroscuro. Where the light is kinder. I have forgotten the texture of early morning light. (Lenkiewicz 2005: 16).

Anja Hilling's earlier work is formally close to Lenkiewicz's writing. She employs a similar 'detritus' of realistic idiolects, mostly in the form of an extremely laconic language ("Hör mal Weihnachtsmann" / "Listen up, Santa Claus", Hilling 2004: 54). And yet, the characters display a postmodern self-aware irony that is unlike Lenkiewicz. Frau Schlüter comments on her neighbour Hans Werner Sandmann:

Das auch noch.

Der Sandmann.

Das wird ganz fies symbolisch jetzt. (Hilling 2005: 55)

[What next?

The sandman.

This is going to be horribly symbolic.]

In becoming aware of the act of speech itself and taking on the distance that comes with a commenting function, Hilling leaves behind the 'pure' interiority which she shared with the British playwrights, and moves towards a dissolution of the boundary between exteriority and interiority. In *Schwarzes Tier*

Traurigkeit, the catastrophe of the forest fire serves as a catalyst: the social construct of the individual is overcome. Individuality is shed to reach a higher level of reflection free of personal desires:

Vielleicht ist es das. Du gehst weiter, weil du Durst hast. Vielleicht ist das Gefühl noch stärker als der Schmerz. Vielleicht weißt du, wenn du keinen Durst mehr spüren kannst, spielen auch Schmerzen keine Rolle mehr. Aber wahrscheinlich bist du einfach noch nicht dort angelangt auf deiner kleinen Reise, dort wo es nichts mehr gibt, keinen Wunsch, nur die Befreiung vom Schmerz. (Hilling 2007a: 11)

[Perhaps that's it. You plough on, because you're thirsty. This feeling is possibly stronger than the pain. Perhaps you know, that when you won't feel thirst anymore, pain will no longer be an issue. But you've not yet reached that stage on this little excursion, the place, where nothing exists anymore, no wishes, only the relief from pain (translation Philip Thorne, 54)]

Speech has here ceased to be either dialogic or realistic, and unlike the play's first act, this second act provides no individualizing speech headers.

Representation of interiority in narration and dialogue

The German-language playwrights frequently use poetic language to depict the struggle for an expression of interiority and of an inner, personal truth. It has emerged by now that an engagement with interiority can occur in various ways, and is often embedded into a questioning of the very possibility of interior worlds in the face of a fragmented subject. Jelinek's personae, for example, appropriate the words from Euripides' *Bacchae* in the hope that their inner lives

will be able to emerge through the exterior referential network of these words: “Weh, weh, das Unheil, deins zuerst und meines dann, nein, meins zuerst und deines dann!” [Ah, what evils, first yours, then mine, no first mine then yours!] (Jelinek 2009: 183). Taking on the words of others has a promise of also giving shape to your life. However, Jelinek immediately indicates the fragility of this hope through the self-correction. The speakers realise in the very act of speaking that the words they adopted as their own still remain insufficient. They try to salvage them, to change them so that they are better fitting to their situation, but to no avail. They will never own these words, never reach an identity of speaker and utterance. The performers’ interiority is no longer identical with what they say, is not subsumed in and synchronous with the exterior act of the statement. Instead, Jelinek sees her texts as a “Möglichkeitsform” that “in die Wirklichkeit des Regisseurs gegossen [wird]” [a potentiality of form that is poured into the reality of the director] (Jelinek 2011c: 116) when realised on stage. Jelinek’s messengers use Euripides’ text to express a suffering, but at the same time they distance themselves from this expression and criticise their words. This reflects Merleau-Ponty’s reminder that “distance is not the contrary of [...] proximity, it is deeply consonant with it” (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 135). That strong moments of intimacy, identification and interiority are possible interpretations for Jelinek’s plays has emerged at the latest from Wieler’s stagings of *Wolken.Heim*. (Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg, 1993) and *Rechnitz* (Münchner Kammerspiele 2009), or Johann Simons’ staging of *Winterreise* [*Winter Journey*] (Münchner Kammerspiele 2011). Jelinek reflects on the simultaneity of attempts to identify with the fragment of a character and an awareness of the remaining difference, the

constructedness of the act, in her text 'Sinn egal. Körper zwecklos' ('Meaning indifferent. Body useless'): the actor

kann nicht so einfach ein anderer werden, aber er kann ein anderer sein!
Allerdings wiederum nicht ganz der, den er darstellen soll, sondern
einer, den er erschafft, den er aus dem Bergenden seines Körpers
hervorzieht, nichts Halbes und auf keinen Fall, bitte!, schon gar nicht
was Ganzes. Nicht sich hervorholen bitte und auch keinen anderen. Im
Irgendwo hängenbleiben [...].

[cannot simply become someone else, but he can be someone else!
However not the one who he is supposed to represent, but one whom he
creates whom he pulls out from the shelter of his body, nothing half-
assed and, please!, nothing complete. Don't pull yourself out and not
someone else either. Get caught in the somewhere [...].] (Jelinek 1997b)

Interiority is therefore constructed as asynchronous potentiality between performer, character, and spectator: what we learn about the personae lies both in what they say and in the way they criticise it as insufficient. What Jelinek calls the "somewhere" is Merleau-Ponty's realm of 'the flesh', of in-betweenness where the figure allows us to see him or her from both outside and inside by becoming both seer and seen, narrating self and narrated self. This is reflected in Jelinek's plays, where "Eine Vermischung von Außen- und Innenwelt [...] als Verbildlichung des Paradoxons der 'künstlichen Natürlichkeit' gewertet werden [kann]" [a mingling of exterior and interior worlds [...] can be taken as a visualisation of the paradox of 'artificial naturalness'" (Johanning 2004: 73).

Structuralist Gérard Genette's theories on focalization will help to investigate how this dissolution between exteriority and interiority is achieved in the forms of narration. Genette recognises that narrative focalization (a formal

aspect often less precisely referred to as 'point of view') and the narrator's relation to the world he or she tells us about are intimately connected to this question of empathy and critical distance:

The narrative can furnish the reader with more or fewer details, and in a more or less direct way, and can thus seem (to adopt a common and convenient spatial metaphor, which is not to be taken literally) to keep at a greater or lesser *distance* from what it tells. (Genette 1980: 162)

Genette employs five basic categories to identify the various grades of distance. In relation to focalization, he differentiates between narrators that are omniscient ("nonfocalized"), those that adopt a character's perspective ("internal focalization") and the so-called "objective" or "behaviourist" look at characters from outside ("external focalization" (ibid: 190). In addition to these different aspects of focalization, a narrator can either participate in the fictional world he or she narrates ("homodiegetic narrator") or stand outside the fictional world ("heterodiegetic narrator") (ibid: 245-246). It is through the manipulation and the peculiar phenomenological blending of internal and external focalization in particular that the German-language playwrights' constitute their respective representations of interiority. Genette's dichotomy of external and internal focalization is heuristically useful, but its application to contemporary German-language drama will mostly show its shortcomings when faced with a more phenomenological understanding of in-betweenness, of exterior and interior as one.

Dramatic realism is mostly defined by a complete narratorial absence according to Pfister:

Das Fehlen des vermittelnden Kommunikationssystems, die unvermittelte Überlagerung von innerem und äußerem Kommunikationssystem, bedingt die 'Absolutheit' des dramatischen Textes gegenüber Autor und Publikum, wie sie in der realistischen Konvention der 'vierten Wand' [...] ihre konsequenteste Bühnenrealisation gefunden hat.

The lack of a mediating system of communication, the unmediated overlap of the inner and outer systems of communication creates the 'absolute' nature of the dramatic text with regard to author and audience, as found in its most consistent stage realisation in the realistic convention of the 'fourth wall'. (Pfister 1977: 22)

The absence of external focalization gives each dialogic statement a quality of absolute (i.e. unmediated) activity: potentiality is suppressed in its immediate realisation in the act since the validity of each statement is not questioned outside the fictional framework (but might well be problematised inside it). When Nick, one of the three young artists in Lenkiewicz's *Shoreditch Madonna*, says that "I'm going to have to go round there. What if he tries it on with her?" (Lenkiewicz 2005: 52), the ensuing dialogue with his friends and colleagues Michael and Hodge confirms his worry about young vulnerable Christina in the company of the older artist Devlin. His words reveal and realise his inner feelings, even if this is done in a contradictory fashion. As an indirect revelation through action, the fact of the utterance itself, its identity with the speaker, is not questioned, but continues to form part of a whole of the model of reality presented in the play.

While this remains true for most British drama, Pfister's emphasis on this absence of external focalization as the norm becomes restrictive with regard to

contemporary German-language plays, in spite of his awareness that this absence is by no means absolute. Theatrical realism manages to partially re-integrate the narrator and his or her focalizing function into its representation of world, thereby creating a mingling of internal and external narration that can be both homodiegetic and heterodiegetic. Depending on the directorial choices made about the attribution of text, the characters can become narrators of their own self. As such, they would clearly be cases of homodiegetic narration. Heterodiegetic narration on stage is more difficult to define: even if the narrator is not one of the characters on stage and does not participate in their story within the fictional world, he or she remains present on stage and thus inevitably bound up with the representation. I will therefore understand heterodiegetic narration in the former sense: a non-participation in the fictional world. Jelinek's messengers are examples for a playtext made up nearly exclusively of this heterodiegetic narration. The fictional worlds exist only in their description, as in the following excerpt:

Haben Sie die Trümmer eines Schlosses rauchen sehen, schon bevor Sie kamen, und das trotz Rauchverbot, das schwer an unseren Seelen hängt? Nein? Also das kommt erst noch!

[Have you seen the smoking ruins of a castle, before you even arrived, and that in spite of the ban on smoking, which hangs heavily on our souls? No? Well, that is yet to come!] (Jelinek 2009: 56)

Hilling's poetic stage directions in *Schwarzes Tier Traurigkeit* can also be defined as heterodiegetic narration if performed by a narrator separate from the six protagonists.¹³ In contrast to Hilling however, Jelinek's messengers are

¹³ As realised in my own staging of this text (cf. chapter 4).

problematised in their function as heterodiegetic narrators when they start reflecting on their own situation:

[O]der verwechsle ich da was?, sicher, ich verwechsle ja immer alles, und nicht immer miteinander. Man sagt es mir aber immer sofort. Man weist mich zurecht. Man verweist mich zurecht.

[[A]m I confusing things?, of course, I always confuse things, and not always with each other. They always tell me immediately though. They always give me a good telling off. For my own good, they send me off.]

(Jelinek 2009: 72)

By changing the frame of reference away from the worlds of the past and to the present situation of narrating, the messengers turn into homodiegetic narrators. As a result, the objectivity that is often associated with the heterodiegetic narrator is destabilised by moments of doubt.

The result of this mixing of focalizations is the fragmentation of the wholeness of the character model as it is otherwise represented by purely internally focalized dialogue. A fluid change from narration into dialogue and back exemplifies the breakdown of the boundaries of self. Compare the effect of the catastrophic forest fire in the second act of Hilling's *Schwarzes Tier Traurigkeit*, to which I already referred above:

- Ich kann nicht mehr.
- Du kannst nicht mehr. Wer trägt sie. Du oder ich.
- Meine Hand tut weh.
- Hacken wir sie ab
- Hör auf.
- Die muss eh ab. Mach dir nichts vor.
- Ich mein die andere. Die andere Hand.

- Dann lass sie los.
- Es geht nicht.
- Hör doch auf mit dieser Schwesternkacke.
- Es geht nicht.
- Die erste Schwierigkeit war, sie zu halten, ineinander, die beiden Hände. Die zweite ist das genaue Gegenteil.
- Als wäre das eine Warnung gewesen, ein Hinweis, diese erste Schwierigkeit.
- Oskar bleibt zurück, reißt, zerrt, versucht, den Kontakt zu trennen. Paul zieht von der anderen Seite, trägt sie vorwärts, die Schwester, die Ex-Frau. (Hilling 2007: 10)

- [I can't go any further.
- You can't go any further. Who's carrying her. You or me.
- My hand hurts.
- Let's chop it off then.
- Stop it.
- It has to come off anyway. Don't delude yourself.
- I mean the other one. The other hand.
- Then let go of her.
- I can't.
- Stop this sibling shit.
- I can't.
- The first problem had been grabbing hold of her, connecting hands. The second was the exact opposite.
- As though this first difficulty had been a warning, an apprehension.
- Oskar stops, pulls, tears, tries to break contact. Paul pulls from the other end, drags her forwards, the sister, the ex-wife. (translation Philip Thorne 48-49)]

The characters change from internal to external focalization. Birgit Haas describes this in relation to Schimmelpfennig's characters: "Die Figuren erleben und kommentieren ihre Lage, werden von innen und außen zugleich gezeigt, sind Kommentatoren und Involvierte auf einmal" [The characters experience and comment on their situation, are shown from outside and inside simultaneously, are both commenting and involved at the same time] (Haas 2007a: 198). In gaining both an outside, objective perspective and an inside, subjective perspective on the characters' interiority, the audience experiences it not as a posited whole which they are asked to access, but as a potentiality that is only realised in the audience's imagination. Genette remarks that in this shift of pronouns external and internal narration enter into a "floating relationship, a pronominal vertigo in tune with a freer logic and a more complex conception of "personality"" (cit. in: Lodge 1977: 246). In the last sections of Loher's *Das letzte Feuer* [*The final fire*] the emotional intensity of Rabe's and Susanne's suffering similarly fuses interiority and exteriority inextricably together:

Obwohl es Susanne war, die zu ihm gekommen

Sucht sie Rabes Nähe nicht

Jetzt muss ich den Namen des Mannes nicht mehr aussprechen. Beide
verschwunden, Kind und Vater.

[Even though it was Susanne who had come to him

She does not seek Rabe's closeness

Now I don't have to utter my husband's name anymore. Both gone. Child
and father.] (Loher 2008: 92)

Here, the eradication of speech-headers extinguishes distinctions between the utterances of the individual characters and of the supra-individual “We”. We learn at the end that the characters’ exterior perspective has an explanation even within the fictional world, since all of them have subsequently left the town or even died. The characters in *Das letzte Feuer* have taken on the function of psychopomps, of travellers between worlds who guard and guide the spirits of the deceased on their way into the underworld. In Greek mythology the psychopomp is often identified with the figure of Hermes. The characters are all bringing something across, both in terms of narration and in terms of bridging the gap between the living and the dead. We will see that this identification of psychopomp and narrator recurs throughout some of the other works discussed in this thesis, for example in Sebastian Nübling’s staging of Simon Stephen’s *Three Kingdoms* and in my own work on Hilling’s *Schwarzes Tier Traurigkeit*. In Loher’s play, the function of psychopomp is a shared one.

In *Rechnitz*, external focalization is taken to an even greater extreme: the figures on stage are no longer identifiable characters but “Boten” [messengers] (Jelinek 2009: 55). Consequently, there is no stepping *out* of character to perform a narratorial function, as in the plays by the other four German language playwrights, but rather a stepping *into* characters, a ventriloquizing through a mask or personae. In the following example, the messengers assume the mask of the Nazi perpetrators and speak with their voices:

Wir können mit diesen Männern nichts mehr anfangen. Deswegen
haben wir sie ja dorthin gesperrt, in unsere Keller. Das war aber ein
schöner Keller, sogar geweißelt, eigentlich der Aufenthalts- und

Erholungsraum für die Pferde, ja, ganz recht: schön geweißelt, nicht dreckig [...].

[These men are no use to us anymore. That's why we locked them there, in our cellars. But that was a nice cellar, whitewashed, usually the common room and space for relaxation for the horses, yes that's right, nicely whitewashed, not dirty [...].] (Jelinek 2009: 97)

In *Rechnitz*, the lack of strict and specific mimetic similarity between the messengers and the various personae they adopt comes to highlight the overall similarity that exists also between the audience and the personae. It is shocking to see how effortlessly the messengers can slip on the masks of Nazis and murderers exactly because their external focalization corresponds with our own perspective. As in Hilling and Loher, this slippage is often located in the pronouns:

Sie haben aus der Geschichte gelernt, sie haben gern gelernt, denn sie wollten sich glücklich fühlen, wer will das nicht? Alles, was ich über das Quälen gesagt haben werde, wird zwar stimmen, aber nicht mehr aktuell sein. Wenn wir das gewußt hätten, was wir heute wissen! Wir hätten es nicht geglaubt.

[They have learnt from history, they have learnt gladly, since they want to feel happy – who doesn't want that? Everything I will have said about torturing will be true, but out of date. If we knew then what we know now! We wouldn't have believed it.] (Jelinek 2009: 81)

The pronoun “they” – through which the messengers distance themselves from the German population after the war, including the perpetrators of the atrocities – transforms into an “I” or “we” through which they identify themselves with the aggressors. It is as if we suddenly find ourselves in an interiority we never wanted to access or share. In all cases, the obliteration of clear boundaries

between dialogue and narration also dissolves the boundaries between the characters/personae and the audience, between internal subjective experiencing and external objective viewing.

If examples of external focalization occur in contemporary British plays, they are the exception rather than the norm and are often indicators of the play's uncomfortable chafing within the formal constrictions of dramatic realism. In contrast to external focalization in German-language drama, it does not create a free interplay between interiority and exteriority but is an attempt to present a 'pure' inside perspective and voice. This can be seen as an instance of what Szondi calls the 'crisis of drama'¹⁴ – an analysis that might have become outdated in relation to German playwriting, but still provides useful insights for the British model due to the relative consistency of its dramatic realism in the 20th century. Increasingly narrative tendencies create "eine Problematik innerhalb etwas Unproblematischem" [something problematic inside something unproblematic] in the relationship of form and content (Szondi 1963: 11). While the idea of 'self' becomes problematic on the level of content (which tries to elucidate who we are and what creates our action), its representation through dramatic dialogue and conventional monologue is still taken as a given by most British playwrights. A closer look at Alexi Kaye Campbell's *Apologia* will help to illustrate this tension between form and content. Szondi talks about Ibsen's "analytische Technik" [analytical technique] (ibid: 24), which focuses on the past and away from the continuous present of 'pure' drama. *Apologia* is similarly analytical; it investigates the past of protagonist Kirstin, her dedication to the revolutionary beliefs of 1968 (especially feminism) and her passion for art, and the concomitant neglect for her sons, which was especially hard for the younger

¹⁴ However, the negative implications of the word 'crisis' are inappropriate from a modern perspective. We should rather talk more neutrally about the 'change' of the dramatic form.

son Simon. The result of this turning towards the past is a strong narrative tendency. Most noticeably, the play begins and ends in monologues by Trudi, Peter's American fiancée. These monologues are both flashbacks, and supply descriptions of memorable incidents (like her trip to Yosemite National Park, or an account of what happened to the characters afterwards) with the aim of providing a psychological background and a logical explanation of the characters' behaviour during the play: "You can be whatever you want to be. You choose. Remember that." (Campbell 2009: 3). Like in other plays of dramatic realism, language here serves largely as a medium to convey the characters' lived experience whilst hiding elements of how this experience is constructed through language. Where it does draw attention to itself, for example in Trudi's Americanisms, it continues to contribute to the characterisation; neither is it problematised *as language* nor does it question the identity of the speaker with him- or herself.

Campbell takes great care to motivate these and other narrative passages through the action in the present. For example, he chooses Kirstin's birthday to bring together all characters in her isolated house in the country. Szondi comments on this kind of set-up: "Der dramatische Stil, den die Unmöglichkeit des Dialogs zu zerstören droht, wird gerettet, indem in der [räumlichen] Enge der Monolog selbst unmöglich wird und sich notwendig in Dialog zurückverwandelt." [The dramatic style, which is endangered by the impossibility of dialogue, is rescued, since in the [spatial] limitation the monologue becomes impossible and necessarily transforms back into dialogue] (Szondi 1963: 96). Since the characters cannot avoid each other, they are forced to converse. Hence it becomes obvious how much the present action in Campbell's play is actually secondary, and only serves as a motivation for the

narrative accounts of the past: “wie sehr sie [Vergangenheit] auch mit einer [...] gegenwärtigen Handlung verknüpft wird, sie bleibt in die Vergangenheit und in die Innerlichkeit verbannt” [however much it [the past] is connected to a [...] present action, it remains past and banished to interiority] (ibid: 29). Campbell does not acknowledge this interest in the past on the level of form. Simon’s critical account of being left alone by his mother is essentially narrative, but Campbell tries to make it dialogic:

SIMON. Do you remember once I came to Italy on my own? It was the summer. I must have been – what – eleven? Peter had gone to stay with a friend in Cornwall. Dad put me on the train in London. You were supposed to pick me up in Genoa.

KIRSTIN. I can’t remember.

SIMON. But something happened and you never made it. I mean, you did eventually but it was like a day later.

KIRSTIN. I really can’t remember. (Campbell 2009: 85)

On the level of characterisation, Kirstin’s repeated insistence on being unable to remember indicates how she and her son possess different versions of the past. They each have a subjective perspective that is dedicated by their priorities. It is no surprise that his mother has a high importance in young Simon’s perspective. Consequently, Kirstin’s different priorities (for example on political activism), away from her family, register only more sharply. On a formal level, Kirstin’s inability to reply is symptomatic for the failure of the active-performative language of pure dramatic dialogue. The real interest of this scene lies in Simon’s revelation of having stayed with a stranger; this corresponds to the moment of crisis and revelation in the well-made play.

Campbell hints at his awareness of the problematic status narration occupies in his play. Trudi prefaces her last monologue with the metatheatrical comment “I was chosen as the prologue and now I’ve been chosen as the epilogue. Maybe it’s because Americans always like to have the first and the last word.” (ibid: 114). Finally, the narrator steps out of the framework of stage reality and becomes an external (but still homodiegetic) focalizer – and yet this occurs too late to have any real impact on the overall form. Epic narration is reduced to the level of witty self-referentiality. We can see in *Apologia* that since narration in dramatic realism has to be psychologically motivated and made dialogic, it remains limited to the function of exploring subjectivity through an internally focalizing first person narrator. Dramatic realism largely chooses to exclude third-person narration that introduces a perspective outside the personal subjective sphere of a character, and consequently does not question its model of subjective identity .

The German-language plays in contrast employ narration not only to destabilise the audience’s sense of the wholeness of the model of character through the introduction of distance between actor and character; they also use this distance as a constructive starting point for the ongoing struggle towards such a wholeness that is constantly displayed on stage and yet never finished. As in phenomenology, distance is here a constitutive part of interiority and (self-) identity. Narration is not only used to split the individual, to make it look at him/herself from outside, but also assumes a crucial role in the attempted formation of a subjective identity. In this, the playwrights have a position similar to the Post-Structuralists, who argued that “human subjectivity finds itself through a discursive universe which produces and reproduces that subjectivity and, often enough, its constitutive illusions” (Rosen 1986: 156). Such a

discursive construction of identity also explores the potential for inter-subjectivity, both between the characters on stage and between characters and audience. For Merleau-Ponty, “there is no problem of the *alter ego*” in this inter-subjectivity “because it is not *I* who sees, not *he* who sees” but “a general visibility [that] inhabits both of us” (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 142). The “We” in *Das letzte Feuer* is an example of such a shared seeing expressed through narration. It does not operate as a coherent chorus speaking in one voice. Nonetheless, its effect remains comparable to that of the chorus in Ancient Greek Tragedies: the “We” characters represent the community the action takes place in, comments on the events, and speaks directly to the audience, reflecting on the moral and philosophical meaning of what both audience and “We” witness on stage. Consequently, the narration of “WIR” in Loher’s play can be read as the constant struggle to form a coherent story of one’s life:

Wir, die wir diese Geschichte erzählen
Uns gibt es womöglich gar nicht
Wir, als Gemeinschaft, die wir vorgeben zu sein
Uns gibt es gar nicht
Wir, wir tragen nur diese Geschichte zusammen
Stück für Stück
Weil wir glauben, zusammen wüssten wir mehr
Als jeder allein
Wir, wir haben uns zusammengefunden
Auf Zeit

[We, who are telling this story
We possibly don’t exist

We, as the community that we are pretending to be
We don't exist
We, we simply compile this story
Piece by piece
Since we believe we would know more together
Than each of us alone
We, we have come together
for a time] (Loher 2008: 16)

Narrativisation here is a process of making sense shared by the audience and thereby enacts the 'flesh' we all share with each other and the world. We have already seen that in Jelinek's playtexts, the figures exist nearly exclusively in and through the discourse: "Die Schauspieler SIND das Sprechen, sie sprechen nicht" [The actors ARE the speaking, they do not speak] (Jelinek 1997b). Her use of a collective "we" in *Wolken.Heim.* can be juxtaposed with Loher's use. Instead of enabling a positive possibility of inter-subjectivity, dramaturg Tilmann Raabke explains how "[g]erade diese Anstrengung, die beste 'Wir' zu sein, (führte) eben nicht zur Gemeinschaft, sondern zur Konkurrenz der einzelnen, immer wieder zur unglücklichen Vereinzelung" [specifically the effort to be the best 'we' did not lead to a community, but to a competition between each of them, and repeatedly to an unhappy isolation] (cit. in: Kurzenberger 2011c: 78). Wieler adds that this demonstrates the "Unmöglichkeit der Individualität, die diese Frauen anscheinend zwingt, sich die Vergangenheit als Kollektiv anzueignen" [the impossibility of individuality, which apparently forces the women to appropriate the past as a collective] (ibid: 78). Jelinek mentions herself how in her texts "it is not a unified 'we' that speaks. It is constantly changing [...]" (cit. in: Bethman 2000: 64). Thus, the process of shaping

interiority through narrativisation is itself tentative. In Palmetshofer, the speakers correct themselves, start again, in their search for the right story:

Am Mittag des neunzehnten August zweitausendund

Am hellichten Mittag des neunzehnten August zweitausendund.

[At noon, on the August the nineteenth two thousand and

At the full light of noon, on the August the nineteenth two thousand

and.] (Palmetshofer 2009: 11)

Palmetshofer also works with constant (self-) correction:

sie kennt jede

jede einzelne Kurve kennt sie

die Kurven waren immer

waren von Anfang an

waren noch vor dem Anfang.

[she knows every

every curve she knows

the curves have always been

have been since the beginning

had been before the beginning.] (ibid: 2)

This “‘Neue Realismus’ [zeigt] die Natur nicht mehr in ihrer Gegebenheit, sondern in ihrer Veränderbarkeit” [new realism‘ no longer [shows] nature as given, but in its changeability] (Jost Hermand cit. in: Klein 2000-2005: 189). Hence, the mixing of internal and external focalization shifts the formal focus from the illusion of representation to the *processes* of representation.

Given the use of external focalization in the German-language playtexts at hand, internal focalization also takes on a new function with regard to the representation of interiority. Through the choice of internally focalized narration, Loher, Schimmelpfennig, Hilling, Palmetshofer and Jelinek give up Szondi's exclusive focus that "das Geschehen im Drama absolute [ist], weil es sowohl von der innerlichen Zuständlichkeit der Seele wie von der äußerlichen der Objektivität abgehoben ist" [in drama, action is absolute, since it differs both from the interior condition of the soul and exterior objectivity] (Szondi 1963: 76) and instead begin to position their playtexts in the *dialectic* between these very poles. In this context, I understand 'dialectic' in its Hegelian/Kantian definition of 'thesis – antithesis – synthesis', with the synthesis of interiority/empathy and exteriority/distance not a state but a continuously oscillating process throughout the plays. The aforementioned inter-subjectivity can be seen as one of the possible syntheses of the dialectical relationship between interiority and exteriority. Internal focalization is used by the German-language playwrights to reveal interior thoughts and emotions – elements that would be considered 'subtext' in more straightforwardly dialogic plays. Compare how Schimmelpfennig explores the emotions of a man frightened by an exploding light bulb in the second scene of *Vorher/Nachher* with Lenkiewicz's characterisation of Christina through the appropriation of a poem by Christina Rossetti:

Der Mann erschrickt. Er erschrickt so sehr, daß sein Herz fast aussetzt.
Er zieht die Schultern hoch und hält die Hände vor das Gesicht, als ob er
einen Schlag erwartete. Er bleibt lange so stehen. Zu lang. Er ist in einer
Weise erschrocken, als sei ihm einmal was Furchtbares geschehen, was

er nie mehr vergessen konnte, wovon er immer noch, Jahrzehnte später, entsetzliche Angst hat.

[The man gets a fright. He gets such a fright that his heart nearly stops. He raises his shoulders and puts his hands in front of his face, as if he's expecting to be hit. He remains standing like this for a long while. Too long. He is frightened in such a way as if something terrible had happened to him at some point, something he could never forget, something which, even decades later, he's terribly afraid of.]
(Schimmelpfennig 2004a: 403)

Christina 'What can I give him,

Poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd

I would give him a lamb.

If I were a wise man,

I would do my part,

Yet what I can I give him?

Give my heart?' (Lenkiewicz 2005: 72)

The technique of internal focalization allows Schimmelpfennig to explore the character's extremely subjective emotional state from the objective point of view of a third-person narrator. This third-person narrator (who might be the actor of the character himself) knows intimate details about this character's thoughts and feelings, but the very explicitness of what he tells the audience raises their doubts about its veracity. Ultimately, the spectator takes these narrated subtexts as potentialities rather than actualities of lived experience. Lenkiewicz

non-focalization in contrast reveals Christina's inner state of longing and emotional turmoil only indirectly – the audience is meant to fill in the circumscribed gap by connecting the words of the song ("give my heart") with her relationship to Charlie, who remains a mysterious presence throughout the play since he is only indicated by a shape under a blanket in Christina's bed-sit. As Jelinek explains in the context of her own playtexts, the figures "should say what's going on, but nobody should ever be able to say of them that something quite different is going on inside of them, something that one can read only indirectly in their faces or their bodies" (Jelinek 1983). Instead, subtext becomes explicit in her puns, as Linda DeMerrit demonstrates in *Ein Sportstück*:

Metathesis, where sounds in a word or between words are transposed, is a favourite tool of the author to expose a meaning or subtext. For example, *Liebesbeziehung* becomes *Leibeserziehung* (22), indicating the transformation of interpersonal love into physical training. (DeMerrit 1998).

I will explore these differences in the interrelation between text and non-verbal subtext further in the account of my rehearsal observations and will be putting them to a practical exploration when discussing my work on Hilling's *Schwarzes Tier Traurigkeit* and Schimmelpfennig's *Ende und Anfang*.

Schimmelpfennig expands the use of internal focalization and the narrativisation of subtext further by not restricting himself to only one character's perspective. In *Vorher/Nachher*, his internal focalization has multiple points of focus. He is able to make the audience see a seemingly straightforward line, "Ich – ich habe so was noch nie gemacht" [I – I have never done anything like it] (Schimmelpfennig 2004a: 404/408) in two completely different ways by

prefacing it with the narration of both the speaking woman's and the listening man's inner feelings:

Sie ist nervös, unsicher, sie überlegt, ob sie sich zu schnell ausgezogen hat. (ibid: 404)

Er ist unsicher und überlegt, ob er sich schneller hätte ausziehen sollen. (ibid: 408)

[She is nervous, insecure, she considers if she's undressed too quickly.

He is insecure and considers if he should have undressed faster.]

The juxtaposition of two separate internal focalizations explores the potential of objectivity through the characters' extreme subjectivity.

Palmetshofer instead works with a fluid shift between outside and inside *within* the characters on both a thematic and a structural level in order to explore the phenomenological blending of objectivity and subjectivity. He specifies that "Einrückungen zur Seitenmitte hin zeigen die Sprechintention hinein in die SpielerInnenengruppe an, im Gegensatz zu einer Gerichtetheit nach außen" [indentation towards the middle of the page signifies a speech intention inwards, towards the group of players, in contrast to an outward direction] (Palmetshofer 2009: 2).¹⁵ The characters thus become commentators on their own actions. The play then goes on to reveal that interiority and exteriority are intimately related to our search for meaning:

INES d'rauf Innereien ausgestreut als könnte man d'raus die
 Zukunft lesen.

TANJA ein Graben, Bohren, Suchen tief nach drinnen

¹⁵ We have seen an example of such an indentation earlier on (p.77).

ROBERT einander Schädel spaltend ging man sich zur Hand

[...]

TANJA und plötzlich nur mehr Welt

ROBERT schweift der Blick nach draußen dann

[INES innards were scattered on it as if you could read the future
in them

TANJA a digging, drilling, searching deep down inside

ROBERT they helped each other to split skulls

[...]

TANJA and suddenly there was only world

ROBERT then the gaze roams outside] (ibid: 4)

In Tanja's and Robert's interpretation, the exterior world emerges by excavating someone's interiority. Through the manipulation of narrative, the playwrights are reproducing on a formal level the content of the characters' struggle to pierce what they consider to be a monadic isolation of the self and enter into a communion with the world. Extreme interiority through internal focalization is also formally close to the contemplative monologue, which Palmetshofer uses recurrently. He makes the asynchrony between the identity of their interiority with the identity of their speaker the central feature of his monologues: the two central characters, Faust and Grete, never appear in person on stage. Instead, they are acted out by the other characters, thus becoming a present absence,

and circumscribed blank space whose monologues also first have to pass through a narrator (cp. Fritz's monologue, Palmetshofer 2009: 5). As we have seen, this asynchrony of the speaker's identity with the identity he speaks of is taken to its extreme by Jelinek's *Rechnitz* where the messengers inhabit various internally focalized positions as well as their own external focalization.

Monologues used as an exploration of extreme interiority also feature in Stephens' *One Minute*. However, these monologues remain unconnected to the rest of the play, whereas Hilling and Schimmelpfennig incorporate narration into their overall structure by presenting the same story through different focalizers. Rather than providing an attempt of constructing an objective perspective contrasting the extreme subjectivity of the monologues (as in Palmetshofer's absent presences), Stephens' monologues in *One Minute* are character-driven reflexions on the past: "And everywhere I look I notice all the children. There just seems to be. It's like there are children everywhere." (Stephens 2003: 24). Consequently, Stephens' use of narration remains on the subjective-empathetic pole in this play. The characters remain stable in their identities, and their narrations do not display the searching tentativeness nor the subtle shift of pronouns identified in the plays by the four German-language playwrights. However, in their limited descriptive function, the monologues in *One Minute* are a first instance where the constructedness of representation breaks through. Like Loher or Hilling, Stephens works with "Raumzeichnung" [a sketching of the space] through language (Frei 2006: 194): "I leave my house and I'm heading for the tube. / It's dark. / I can hear music coming from somewhere behind me and to my left" (Stephens 2003: 37). Close-up visual details and impressions from other senses create an "in-betweenness" between the figure's and the audience's interiority, bypassing the visual representation on stage. Yet since

the descriptive passages always narrate something absent and never engage with an onstage presence (such as another character), they never create the mask-like effect some of the most complex descriptions in the German-language plays obtain, as we will see in the section on the relationship between texts and gestures. Instead, Stephens emphasises the fictionalising aspect of these descriptions, a creation of stage reality that goes beyond the visual representation.

Unlike *One Minute* and *Apologia*, Simon Stephens *Pornography* displays a more radical use of narration; of all the British plays discussed here, *Pornography* comes closest to the investigation of interiority and exteriority present in the plays by the four German-language authors. Crucially, the play was commissioned by the Schauspielhaus Hannover, the Schauspielhaus Hamburg and the Festival Theaterformen in Germany, and Stephens sees it as his “Germanic post-modernist study” (cit. in: Sierz 2006: 34’08-34’14).¹⁶ While there is a certain tongue-in-cheek quality to this quotation, Stephens’ statements on German theatre in other contexts underline that at its core, this consideration of *Pornography* as “study” or experiment is meant sincerely. He also acknowledges the dialectical relationship between writing styles and staging techniques:

I knew I was writing for him [Sebastian Nübling, the director of the German premiere]. I thought I could write you a traditional play, the type of play I might write for the National or the Exchange, but you’d just rip it apart anyway, so why not rise to the challenge of that particular

¹⁶ I would question his claim that the play is “post-modernist”. Instead, I consider it more useful to reflect upon the way *Pornography*, like the plays by the German-language playwrights, displays a post-dramatic awareness in relation to its style (use of narrative, problematization of character) whilst also working on a dramatic premise (use of dialogue and characters).

commission. [...] He's a director who is very brilliant at directing direct audience address. (cit. in: Sierz 2008: 10'37-11'08)

Nonetheless, *Pornography* also has to be read as a further development of issues Stephens already encountered in *One Minute*. Therefore, it is not a one-off attempt of writing in the German style, but a continuing experiment in form in direct communication with the British tradition. The first thing noticeable about the play is its abandonment of clear-cut characters. None of the monologic and dialogic fragments is identified by a speech-header, a technique only very rarely encountered in contemporary British plays (another example would be Crimp's *Attempts on her Life*). This is the first indicator that Stephens' concept of subjecthood is potentially more fluid than in his earlier plays, since he allows for a free allocation of speech sections to different speakers. The adopted perspective remains that of the internal focalizer in first person narration, but unlike in *One Minute*, Stephens uses different internal focalizers and centres them around the same subject-matters: the London Olympics, the G8, the Live 8 concert, and crucially the 7/7 bombings. The shared subject-matter thus works like a leitmotif, and each internal focalization provides a different point of view. Consequently, even though on their own they are in line with Stephens' exploration of subjectivity in *One Minute*, in their entirety the different focalizations constitute an attempt at inter-subjective objectivity markedly different from the model of reality posited as objective in dramatic realism.

Stephens also plays with the connection between dialogue and monologue. The play as a whole is clearly narrative, taking into account Nübling's skill for directing "direct audience address". Some sections are more dialogic (stories 5 and 3 in the reverse countdown), yet in other sections, dialogue and monologue blend into each other. In story 6, the aggressive

teenager mostly narrates his own story; however, there are sections in which he seems to ventriloquise others' opinions. This could be part of the monologue, which would liken these sections to free indirect discourse, or could be spoken by other actors and thus be more dialogic:

Dad comes home. Mum's watching the television.

What have you been doing?

You what?

While I've been at work all day. What have you been doing?

I cleaned the house. (Stephens 2008: 10)

The teenager either takes on multiple identities in a conscious act of performance, or conjures them up through the power of his words. Both cases are deeply theatrical, since their aim is to show the very constructedness of his story: his life is not presented through a stable (and thus apparently objective) model, but through one that openly shows how he constructs different models of himself and that therefore displays the subjective nature of these models. Jelinek's 'planes of language' (typographically embodied by the nearly uninterrupted flow of the text on the page, without speech headers or even paragraphs) can also present a similar case of multiple voices:¹⁷

Wollen Sie uns sagen, daß Sie einen Menschen gesehen haben, der aus dem Schoß seiner Mutter vom Strahl eines Blitzes herausgelöst worden ist wie ein Knochen aus einem Huhn? Machen Sie sich nicht die Mühe, ich würde es Ihnen nicht glauben!

¹⁷ Another function of these planes of languages, outside of the question of interiority that is the focus of my thesis, is the creation of a complex web of intertextuality through the already mentioned "montages of playfully and deconstructively manipulated quotes (Jüres-Munby 2009: 46).

[Do you want to tell us that you have seen a human being who was separated from his mother's womb by a bolt of lightning like a bone from a chicken? Don't take the trouble, I wouldn't believe you anyway!]
(Jelinek 2009: 56)

The opposition inherent in these two sentences constitutes a fragmentation of subjecthood, no matter if they are turned into dialogue by being given to two different speakers or if they are spoken just by one character. Like Jelinek, Stephens explores the construction of a life-story through narration in his blending of monologue and dialogue. Having already mentioned the objective function of the inter-subjectivity of all the voices in the play, I want to draw attention to the other instance of objectivity, the obituaries that close the play. Stephens includes short statements about all 52 victims of the bombing. After the intimacy of the preceding narratives, their matter-of-factness is both shocking and touching: "She usually drove to her PA job while her boyfriend preferred to cycle from their home in Tottenham, north London" (Stephens 2008: 63). In the British premiere, these statements were projected as text after the curtain call (cf. Sierz 2008: 22'32-22'40), thus establishing a link between the play and the real life of the audience. And yet it is only because they have been previously filled with subjective details that the obituaries are able to develop their full impact. Whereas the pure facts, fragmented and superficial as they are, would possibly leave us cold and distanced, their combination with the personal stories elicits the intended Brechtian paradox of epic theatre: a tension between empathy and distance, between subjectivity and objectivity. Audience and characters are shown to be linked, not separated, by the shifting and ambiguous nature of reality they have to contend with. Stephens consciously undermines the apparent objectivity of the obituaries, their factuality, by

inserting a blank one. He provides a space for the audience's associations and their own fragmented knowledge about the victims, a space that is extremely subjective due to its openness. *Pornography* can therefore serve an example of the stylistic freedom of experimentation away from 'dramatic realism' which contemporary German-language plays can offer British theatre.

The relationship between gestures and words: Jakobson's metonymy and metaphor as modes of representation

Until now, my analysis of how narration and dialogue communicate interiority has focused on the texts. However, it is in the conjunction of text and performance, word and body, where narration develops its phenomenological force and potentiality develops most fully. In particular, an investigation into how spoken text and *gestures* interact will provide an important insight into the different possibilities inherent in the more dialogic mode of dramatic realism and the more narrative mode of theatrical realism. I understand 'gesture' here as including "Bewegungen des Körpers" [the body's movement] and its "statische Haltungen [static positions], (Kuba 2005: 129). This inclusion of static positions might be startling, but according to Kuba's summary of historical and contemporary definitions of gesture, there is no consistent focus on movement; "Mimik und [...] Bewegungen der Hände" [facial expressions and hand movements] (ibid: 129) are often regarded as important aspects of gesture, but not as its defining feature. Another aspect often attributed to gestures – intentionality or the purposeful creation of meaning – has to be excluded from our basic definition. Contemporary postdramatic theories of the body state: "Intentionalität kann nicht generell als Kennzeichen der Geste gelten"

[intentionality can generally not be seen as a defining feature of the gesture] (ibid: 129): “we have abandoned the realm of purposive means” (Lehmann 2006: 164). Gestures are “eine Bewegung des Körpers oder eines mit ihm verbundenen Werkzeugs, für die es keine zufriedenstellende kausale Erklärung gibt [a movement of the body or of a tool connected to it for which there is no satisfactory causal explanation] (Flusser 1991: 8) – no matter if we talk about gestures in dramatic or in theatrical realism. Any gesture has a certain opacity where meaning ceases to be easily readable; my analysis of metaphoric and metonymical gestures will depend on identifying the intensity of this opacity in certain kinds of gestures. In his discussion of Brecht’s Epic Theatre, Walter Benjamin furthermore defines ‘gesture’ as having,

im Gegensatz zu den Aktionen und Unternehmungen der Leute einen fixierbaren Anfang und ein fixierbares Ende. Diese streng rahmenhafte Geschlossenheit jedes Elements einer Handlung, die doch als ganze in lebendigem Fluß sich befindet, ist sogar eines der dialektischen Grundphänomene der Geste.

[in contrast to people’s actions and undertakings, a definable beginning and a definable end.¹⁸ This strictly framed unity of every element of an attitude, which nonetheless as a whole is a living flow, is one of basic dialectical phenomena of the gesture.] (Benjamin 1977: 521)

The opportunity to see a gesture as a “framed unity” and take it out of the flow of action makes it the ideal locus for my analysis, since it allows its semiotic,

¹⁸ Benjamin’s notion is therefore also extremely applicable to the static gesture, which by definition has a clearer beginning (the position is taken) and end (the position is abandoned or changed) than gestures in motion.

significatory aspect to emerge alongside and inside the aforementioned opacity, and in addition clearly delineates its relationship to the spoken text in time.¹⁹

I will employ David Lodge's development of Roman Jakobson's concepts of 'metaphor' and 'metonymy' in order to analyse the different ways text and the performance of gestures combine to represent interiority in stage narration or dialogue. Lodge quotes Jakobson's position:

Metonymy and metaphor may be the characterizing structures of two poetic types – poetry of association by contiguity, of movement within a single world of discourse, and poetry of association by comparison, joining a plurality of worlds (cit in: Lodge 1979: 73).

In its focus on a *single* world, metonymy is closer to the formal aspects of dramatic realism in its attempt to create the inner world of the unified subject. Metonymy also shares the sense of hierarchy of dramatic realism: based on the principle of "combination" (Jakobson 1995: 115), it implies a superordinate set of rules that governs the mechanism of combination. As discussed in the section on dialogue, the wholeness of a model of reality is assumed as the ultimate reference point for both words and gestures. The "plurality of worlds" associated with metaphor on the other hand firmly links it with theatrical realism and its potentiality of a multitude of inner worlds. In contrast to metonymy's principle of combination, metaphor is guided by the principle of "selection" according to Jakobson (ibid: 115). In this context, he sees selection as an associative action guided not by rules but by similarities. Lodge explicitly recognises the inherent theatricality of a metaphoric relationship between text and performance:

¹⁹ Furthermore, Benjamin's definition of gesture as something that is interrupted will gain additional importance when considering the special nature of the metaphoric gesture in relation to narration.

The naturalistic 'fourth wall' plays which have dominated the commercial stage in our era must be seen as 'metonymic' deviation from metaphoric norm which the drama displays when viewed in deep historical perspective. (Lodge 1979: 82)

I would question Lodge's notion of the fourth wall as an inherent feature of metonymic plays. As we will see, a hybrid between metonymic and metaphoric modes of representation is more common than any 'pure' or 'ideal' version of the two. Metonymic gestures occur even in plays like Jürgen Gosch's staging of Schimmelpfennig's *Vorher/Nachher* (Schauspielhaus Hamburg 2004), which takes its basic premise from a direct audience address in which no fourth wall exists. The distinction between metaphoric and metonymical modes of representation is heuristic and qualitative, not absolute. Lodge rightly points out that "it is a theory of dominance of one quality over another, not of mutually exclusive qualities" (ibid: 80). Since both metaphor and metonymy are 'tropes' in the definition of rhetoric, and thus belong to a figurative mode of representation, what they have in common is as important as what separates them. Semiotically, they are both symbols – signifiers – and not the signified itself. Metonymic gestures can expand into metaphors both within the whole model (as in dramatic realism) and in the relationship between several different models (as in theatrical realism) In line with my overall argument, my reading of gestures as qualitatively more metonymic or more metaphoric focuses on their relationship with a character's interiority. A shaking hand as a sign of tension and nervousness is more metonymic; the gesture is one element of a whole repertoire of possible bodily signs of nervousness. The shying away from the touch described in our first example (the woman about to cheat on her boyfriend in *Vorher/Nachher*) cannot be so clearly placed in a system of signification but

nonetheless has the potential for meaning. It is a more metaphoric representation of inner states.

Whereas most British performances are characterised by the metonymic quality, most German-language performances exhibit more metaphoric qualities. According to Poschmann, there is a “*dialektische[...] Verschränkung von Dramatik und theatraler Praxis*” [dialectical interconnection of dramatic writing and theatrical practice] (Poschmann 1997: 5). The metonymic elements of British performance practice, its focus on the representation of a model of reality that is whole, therefore both result from corresponding texts of dramatic realism such as *Apologia* or *Shoreditch Madonna* and in turn lead to the further creation of such texts. However, this dialectical relationship becomes potentially problematic if plays from a different culture are introduced and the mutual stylistic influence ceases to function. In my investigation of the two ways of linking text and performance in England and the German-speaking countries, I will examine both where these differ and where they overlap. Indeed, we will see how metaphorical and metonymic modes can include each other.

Metonymic relationships of text and gesture in dialogue

Within the whole model of reality of dramatic realism, gestures are often interpreted as ‘natural’ rather than constructed or performed expressions of interiority. This follows a classical understanding of gestures in which “*die Bewegungen der Seele ihren natürlichen Ausdruck in den Bewegungen des Körpers [finden]*” [the movements of the soul find their natural expression in the movements of the body] (Kuba 2005: 130). I explicitly acknowledge that ‘natural’ in this context is in itself a social, cultural and historical construction. What

underpins this construction is the assumption of a stable framework of interpretation, the belief in authoritative model of the reality of inner life to which gestures can provide access. Gestures are [understood “als Reflex der Bewegung der Seele” [as a reflex of the movement of the soul] (ibid: 130). The body as the site of the gesture “was disciplined, trained and formed to serve as a signifier, but was not an autonomous problem” (Lehmann 2006: 162). An example already quoted in my initial discussion of dialogue and dramatic realism is Lessing’s idea of the *nuance* as the ideal of natural acting: the actress of Sara Sampson settling her skirt with an “unscheinbare[s] Zucken” [inconspicuous twitch] while dying (Kolesch 2005: 223). This twitch is seen as an expression of her soul at the state of death: the actress shows the character of Sara retaining a sense of order and propriety, a bourgeois breeding that is rooted so deeply that it becomes unconscious. The metonymic gesture is closely linked to dialogue in that both favour the immediate realisation and *presence* of the act over potentiality; Girshausen’s statement, quoted in earlier on in relation to the words, also holds true for the gestures of dramatic realism: “Die Zeichen partizipieren [...] unmittelbar an den Energien des von ihnen Bezeichneten” [the signs immediately participate in the energies of that which they signify] (Girshausen 2005: 207). For Aristotle, both dialogue and metonymic gesture are an *action*, a “movement in which the end is present” (Aristotle 1924, Book IX, Part 6). Rebecca Tyrell’s comment on the character of Christina in Sean Mathias’ production of Lenkiewicz’s *Shoreditch Madonna* (Soho Theatre 2005) reveals this idea of an end, a goal achieved, in its very grammatical construction: “Christina [...] who rotates and grates her bottom jaw to show how very off her face she is” (Tyrell 2005). The gesture of the grating jaws has a

clear expressive aim for Tyrell: “*to show*” (my emphasis) Christina’s inner distress.

The metonymic gesture favours such a focus on the small outward detail and its intricate relationship to the larger inner whole. Again we have a hierarchy, which Stanislavski’s statement that one has “to keep one’s body completely at the service of one’s feelings” underlines (Stanislavski 1981: 105). In such a psychological understanding of action, gestural detail is subjugated to and ruled by the inner feelings. McConachie relates how “[m]ost near the psychological end of the continuum [of acting] believe that the proper ‘internal’ psychological exercises will draw the body along with the mind” (McConachie 2013: 44).²⁰ Jakobson also mentions this importance of detail: “the Realist author [...] is fond of synecdochic details” (Jakobson 1995: 130). He relates it to the logic that underpins contiguity and leads to an overall coherence of life according to the assumed ‘natural’ patterns of dramatic realism. Moreover, outside gesture, words, and inside state are clearly complementary and “simultaneous” (ibid: 115), both with each other and with the reality they represent. Interiority is not absent or unknown, but “*in praesentia*” (ibid: 115), a given, and realised (but not exhausted) in the act of words and gestures. When Kristin’s second son Simon turns up in the second act of Campbell’s *Apologia*, Josie Rourke’s production (Bush Theatre, 2009) provided a readable gestural representation of his inner feelings: “John Light’s fragile Simon [...] sits quivering with grief, as she [Kristin] picks splintered glass out of his palm” (Bassett 2009). His quivering reveals his emotional life, even before he says that “I’ve always

²⁰ Crucially, McConachie then goes on to draw out the shortcomings of this a purely psychological understanding of acting that is still dominant in dramatic realism. According to the insights of cognitive science, “working up emotions through imitation or through memory is not really an either/or proposition in terms of our mindful bodies. Both techniques involve animating an emotional response through the sensorimotor system; one method is simply more direct than the other” (McConachie 2013: 44).

felt this way. [...] Disjointed. [...] And dislocated. Disillusioned. Dis – this, dis – that. Disturbed, distracted, discombobulated” (Campbell 2009: 80). A prime example of British dramatic realism, the gesture here promises direct access to the workings of the soul. Gestures which are not part of an overall clear signification strategy are usually dismissed in such a context, as for example, by Suzi Feay’s comment on the naked appearance of the actor of the incestuous brother in the London premiere of Sean Holmes’s production of *Pornography* (Tricycle Theatre, 2009): “Sam Spruell – who deserves a bravery award for his full-frontal nudity, which really doesn’t add much to the action” (Feay 2009). The lack of action is criticised, whereas the gain of potentiality, of free-floating meaning, is not recognised. In its focus on communication over a complexity of information, the metonymic gesture is therefore always precariously balanced on the verge of being drained of real meaning and ending up as simplified and conventional, according to Vilém Flusser:

Je mehr Information eine Geste enthält, desto schwieriger ist es offenbar für einen Empfänger, sie zu lesen. Je mehr Information, desto weniger Kommunikation. Folglich: je weniger eine Geste informiert (je besser sie kommuniziert), desto leerer ist sie und desto angenehmer und ‘hübscher’, denn sie erfordert wenig Anstrengung, um gelesen zu werden.

[The more information a gesture contains, the more difficult it seems to be for a recipient to read it. More information equals less communication. The consequence: the less a gesture informs (the more it communicates), the emptier, the more pleasing and ‘prettier’ it is, for it requires less effort to read it.] (Flusser 1991: 20)

Flusser highlights that “die durch eine Geste übermittelte Informationsmenge an den Code der Geste geknüpft ist” [the amount of information transmitted by the gesture is connected to the code of the gesture] (ibid: 20). Gestures which communicate too easily have petrified into a one-dimensional and easily decodable code, whereas gestures whose information content exceeds their communicative potential to establish complete understanding have a more complex and dense code.²¹ It is therefore important for the metonymic gesture to retain a trace of opacity, some information that cannot be easily read in the context of the current situation and the character’s interiority. A good example I have encountered recently comes from Max Stafford-Clark’s production of Stella Feehily’s *Bang Bang Bang* (Out of Joint 2011, watched at the Northcott Theatre, Exeter). When aid worker Sadhbh (Orla Fitzgerald) is talking to Congolese warlord Colonel Mburame (Babou Ceesay) about multiple allegations that he and his men have raped and killed civilians, the Colonel counters by telling her the story of his own victimisation: “When I was a child there were massacres in my village. The blue helmets stood by [...]” (Feehily 2011: 48). He shows her his scar and insists, “Touch me. Touch me.” (ibid: 48). After an initial hesitation, Sadhbh touches his scar in a seemingly straightforward metonymic gesture. She does not speak during this incident; her face is quiet and composed. The earlier situation gives the situation a potentially sexual dimension, and yet this is not underlined or in any way clearly ‘communicated’ by the actors’ gestures. There certainly is an intimacy suggesting the inkling of an understanding between the two characters. It is clear that this gesture of contact has a great impact, but the exact emotional

²¹ For the purposes of his argument, Flusser understands ‘communication’ solely through its referential function, and does not take into consideration the other functions listed by Jakobson (aesthetic, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual) which have come to define communication theory.

nature of this impact remains opaque. As a consequence, this gesture is able to provide depth to a set-up (the warlord with the bad childhood) that could easily have become a more one-dimensional 'psychologisation' of the warlord's motives for his evil deeds. We can see that while dramatic realism favours metonymic gestures, it does not completely exclude metaphoric ones; the former can expand into the latter *within* the framework of the dramatic fiction.

We also encounter instances of metonymic gestures in the theatrical realism of the German performances at hand. In fact, they are often even more noticeable because they stand out from a more metaphoric context. In the fifth scene of *Vorher/Nachher*, an expert on insects talks about the invasion of a dangerous bug from Australia. When describing it as "Kein großer Flieger, wirkt eher ungeschickt" [No great flier; it seems rather clumsy] (Schimmelpfennig 2004a: 405), he buries his hands in his pockets and grins awkwardly. On the word "ungeschickt", he also touches his head and looks to the side as if ashamed. His body language clearly expresses how nervous and excited he is to speak in front of people, and also establishes him as the stereotypical nerdy scientist. Our ability to *enjoy* this stereotype, this overly easy communication, created through metonymical detail stems from the fact that the fragmentation into many short scenes and the other characters' predominantly metaphoric modes of representation allow us to understand the constructedness of this mode of representation. A style of acting that otherwise strives to appear natural is here shown in its virtuosity *as a style*.

As we have seen in the example from *Bang Bang Bang*, metonymic gestures can begin to partake of the greater opacity of metaphor. This is also the case in theatrical realism. Felicitas Brucker's world premiere of

Palmetshofer's *faust hat hunger und verschluckt sich an einer grete* (Wiener Schauspielhaus 2009) was dominated by metaphoric gestures. The stage design was abstract (a scaffold standing in for a house) and the actors often narrated large sections of text directly to the audience from the front of the stage. Towards the end of the play, Palmetshofer inserted another "Zwischenspiel auf dem TV" ["Interlude on TV"] (Palmetshofer 2009: 11). A voice tells us about 'Grete's' journey into the wood in her car. Brucker set this scene in front of the red curtain. One of the actresses (Katja Jung) described the journey while the other one (Nicola Kirsch) stood in for 'Grete', remaining silent and facing away. When Jung said "die Felder links und rechts / die erste Kurve kommt / und ihr Körper kennt die nicht so gut" [the fields left and right / the first bend approaches / and her body doesn't know it very well"] (ibid: 12), she went around the silent Kirsch, who is thus forced to turn her head if she wanted to remain facing away. On a simple metonymic level, this movement of the head partly illustrated the curves on the road and the movement of the driver's body. However, the complete lack of other metonymic signs (for example a steering wheel) as well as the actress's general attitude also allowed for a more metaphoric reading, where the turned head communicates denial, apathy, rejection – all three traits that are directly connected to 'Grete's' chosen isolation in the forest and to the killing of her unborn child. Consequently, this is an instance where a metonymic gesture transcended its direct signifiatory meaning and acquires further, more complex meanings from its context.

A similar contrast between the individual metonymic gesture and the overall metaphoric context occurred in Jossi Wieler's mise-en-scène of Jelinek's *Rechnitz*. When one of the messengers (André Jung) spoke about the massacre in the woods and tells us "von diesem Tannenwipfel könnte ich das

alles besser sehen" [I could see everything better from the treetop of this fir] (Jelinek 2009: 124), another messenger (Katja Bürkle) climbed on the seat in one of the cubicles that formed part of the stage design and looked out, rifle in hand. What a moment before had been a distanced discussion about the massacre, where the messengers' gestures did not directly relate to or illustrate the events described, suddenly became an instance of direct representation through a metonymic gesture. However, because of the context, we remained aware of the constructedness of this gesture. In the tension between metonymic gesture and distanced narration, the gesture itself took on a Brechtian, demonstrative aspect. This ambiguity was supported by the stage design, which itself hovered between the metonymic and the metaphoric. On the one hand, with its ability to reveal hidden doors and transform walls into cubicles, it was not a realistic representation of a castle or woods and thus created distance. On the other hand, the wooden panelling of the cubicles and the antlers on the wall took on a more metonymic function and could stand in for the woods when the gestures themselves became metonymic. Throughout the whole play, metonymic gestures and objects punctured the messenger's distanced telling of events with moments of poignant realism:

Viermal werden während des 110minütigen Botenberichts von den Boten die Kleider gewechselt, viermal wird auf der Bühne gegessen. Und jedesmal entstehen zwischen szenischer Aktion und Botenrede Bedeutungen, die an Vergangenes, die an Schreckliches erinnern. Das Entkleiden der Boten verbindet sich mit dem Entkleiden der Opfer und zeigt zugleich das intime Outfit einer obszönen Erotik des Mordens. Die Pelzmäntel, die ebenso unversehens wie fünf Gewehre aus einem Wandschrank fallen, rufen die Kleiderberge ins Gedächtnis, die die Ermordeten des Holocaust hinterlassen haben. Wenn die Boten sich in

sie hüllen, ist plötzlich skrupellose Beuteaneignung im Spiel. Das Fast-food-Speiseprogramm mit Pizzaschachteln und Hähnchentüten führt das gleichzeitige Reden über die Leiden der Opfer in die Ekelzonen, die den Zuschauer symbolisch und real zum Würgen bringen, macht die Boten zu schmatzenden Menschenfressern, die den Opfern die Pizzahaut abziehen oder ihre Knochen in den Gully der Bühnenmitte werfen. Das klingt in der Beschreibung plakativ, wird aber von den Schauspielern und dem Regisseur wie nebenbei und ganz selbstverständlich behandelt und ist daher besonders schwer erträglich.

[The messengers change clothes four times during their 110-minute-long report, and they also eat on stage four times. Each time meaning is created between scenic action and the messengers' report, which reminds us of the past, of something terrible. The undressing of the messengers connects with the undressing of the victims and simultaneously displays the intimate outfit of an obscene eroticism of killing. The fur coats that – like the rifles – suddenly fall out of a closet, recall the mountains of clothes that the victims of the holocaust left behind. When the messengers wrap themselves in these, ruthless appropriation of booty suddenly enters the game. The fast-food menu with its pizza boxes and chicken bags leads the simultaneous talking about the suffering of the victims into areas of disgust which make the spectator gag both symbolically and actually; it turns the messengers into munching cannibals who peel off the pizza-skin from their victims or throw their bones into the drain in the middle of the stage.]

(Kurzenberger 2011c: 88f)

In all these instances, the metonymic gesture serves as a sudden invasion of the real. What the gesture might be missing in informational complexity on the level of character, it makes up for on the level of complexity and self-awareness

of the theatrical code. Consequently, the model of reality of metonymy becomes, on a higher level, just one world among many.

Metaphorical relationships of text and gesture in narration

As discussed above, the worlds and characters represented on stage in theatrical realism are not governed by one dominant model of reality. Consequently, gestures in this context often take on a different process of meaning-making and become metaphorical. They no longer always work together with the words of dialogue in creating an action or act. As Johanning describes with regard to Jelinek's plays, "die akustischen und visuellen Formen [stehen] gleichrangig nebeneinander, ohne sich einem primären Sinn unterzuordnen" [the acoustic and visual forms are placed next to each other as coequals, without being subjugated to a primary meaning] (Johanning 2004: 72). Instead, the descriptive nature of narration favours a looser association of gestures and words. As Agamben has recognised, our relationship to gestures has changed in the modern world:

Eine Epoche, die ihre Gesten verloren hat, ist eben deshalb zwanghaft von ihnen besessen; Menschen, denen alle Natürlichkeit abgezogen worden ist, wird jede Geste zu einem Schicksal. Und je mehr die Gesten ihre Selbstverständlichkeit unter dem Wirken unsichtbarer Kräfte verloren, desto unentzifferbarer wurde das Leben.

[An epoch which has lost its gestures is for that very reason obsessed with them; for people who have lost any kind of naturalness, every gesture becomes destiny. The more the gestures lost their

unselfconsciousness, their unencumberedness under the influence of unseen forces, the less people could decipher life.] (Agamben 1992: 99).

Agamben goes on to explicitly acknowledge the theatre as the ideal place for the modern type of gesture, “Potenz und Akt, Natürlichkeit und Manier, Kontingenz und Notwendigkeit sich verbinden” [in which potentiality and act, naturalness and mannerism, contingency and necessity are combined] (ibid: 100). Instead of both being ruled by the governing logic of the model, narration presents us with one set of potential worlds, and gestures with another set. These sets often overlap, and it is this combination of difference and similarity that I call ‘metaphoric’ (cp. Jakobson 1995: 119). Essential for my reading of metaphor is the resulting split or asynchrony between both gesture and words as a sign and their signifiatory content. They are no longer a metonymical part of a greater whole, but can still be related to a potential meaning through the *jump* of association. In her definition of the term, Katrin Kohl explicitly sees metaphor as “das Resultat einer Destabilisierung des Bezugs [zwischen Bezeichnetem und Bezeichnendem], die sich prozessual als ‘Übertragung’ und bezüglich der resultierenden Bedeutung als ‘Uneigentlichkeit’ verstehen lässt” [the result of a destabilisation of the connection [between signifier and signified] that can be understood processually as ‘transference’ and in relation to the resulting meaning as ‘not-itself’] (Kohl 2007: 26). Since the gesture’s relationship to interiority is seen as being established not through something directly pertaining or subjugated to interiority, but through something else, inner meaning and ‘truth’ are always “*in absentia*” (Jakobson 1995: 115). The potential “plurality of worlds” is circumscribed and hinted at by the loose interaction of metaphoric gestures rather than given and defined by the close logical weave of contiguous details of the metonymic gesture. Meaning is not a

deduction but a creation: “metaphor creates the similarity [rather] than [...] formulates some similarity antecedently existing“ (Max Black, cit. in the original English in: Haverkamp 1983: 18). The metaphoric gesture is therefore no longer an ‘expression of the soul’ that only has to be deciphered.

In the 18th century, Johann Jakob Engel differentiated between “zwei Arten von redebegleitenden Gesten, den malenden und den ausdrückenden” [two types of speech-accompanying gestures, the painterly ones and the expressive ones] (Kuba 2005: 133). If the metonymic gestures belong to the expressive type, the metaphorical gestures are more painterly. Engel does not provide further detail on the painterly gestures, but Merleau-Ponty’s argument for a phenomenological view of gesture continues along this line of metaphoric or painterly meaning. According to Kuba,

Das Verständnis von Gesten beruht für Merleau-Ponty nicht auf dem Ausdruck im Sinn einer kausalen Verknüpfung psychischer und physischer Vorgänge, er will es aber ebensowenig als Prozess der Entzifferung eines vorgängigen Sinns verstanden wissen, in dem der Geste die Rolle eines passiven Bedeutungsträgers zufällt.

[the understanding of gestures for Merleau-Ponty does not depend on expression in the sense of a causal relationship between psychological and physical events, nor is it a process of deciphering of a pre-given sense in which gestures only play the part of a passive carrier of meaning.] (ibid: 134)

Gestures and our perception of them therefore do not *carry* meaning, but play a crucial part in its *creation*. The open simultaneity of sameness and difference in the metaphoric gesture acknowledges this process of meaning making and is

thus more closely connected with the potentiality of meaning in a gesture than with the act. Agamben compares this kind of gesture to

der Kunst des Mimen [wo] die Gesten, die auf die vertrautesten Zwecke bezogen sind, als solche ausgestellt werden und deshalb 'zwischen dem Wunsch und der Erfüllung, zwischen dem Ausüben und seinem Erinnern' in der Schwebe bleiben (sie verbleiben in dem, was Mallarmé 'un *milieu pur*' nennt).

[the art of the mime [where] gestures, which refer to the most familiar purposes, are exhibited as such and therefore remain floating 'between the wish and its fulfilment, between the execution and its remembrance' (they remain in what Mallarmé calls 'un *milieu pur*').] (Agamben 1992: 103)

In this text, Agamben also refers to Benjamin's definition of gesture as interruption, which brings us back to the essential split between gesture and meaning in metaphor. In performance, this split can be realised in a variety of ways. This includes a temporal and spatial split, since Benjamin explicitly relates the phenomenon of interruption to the desire in Epic Theatre to get beyond the seemingly 'natural' development of *action*, of how one event follows another, and to the analysis of *situations* (cp. Benjamin 1977: 535).

We encountered one technique of splitting in Sean Holmes's UK premiere of *Pornography*.²² "actors addressing the audience are observed and even touched by other cast members in Sean Holmes's Static [sic] production [...]." (Murphy 2009). The split here existed between the gestures and words in one scene, and the cast members extraneous to the scene in the world of the

²² Interestingly, the narrative nature of the playtext seems to invite a more metaphorical representation even in Great Britain, which reinforces Poschmann's argument for the dialectical relationship between text and performance.

story. Through their joined, juxtaposed existence on stage, meaning could *jump* from one actor to the other. Brucker's staging of *faust hat hunger* also employed such an associative jump and immediately undermines it. When Ines (Nicola Kirsch), Paul (May Mayer), Robert (Vincent Glander) and Anne (Katja Jung) recounted how "~~Tanja~~" (as Grete, played by Bettina Kerl) and "~~Fritz~~" (as Heinrich, played by Steffen Höld) meet again after both have fled the communal party, they described a tentative encounter. They talked about the party for a while until she

hakt sich bei ihm ein und sagt

ich warn dich du, für Ärsche, arrogante noch

dazu hab ich leider keinen Auftrag

sozial

die schick ich gleich woanders hin

[links arms with him and says

I warn you, my job doesn't make me responsible for

arseholes, even less arrogant ones,

socially

I immediately send them packing] (Palmetshofer 2009: 9)

However, "~~Tanja~~" and "~~Fritz~~" themselves immediately kissed passionately when they first see each other, and then went to the side of the stage to watch the rest of the description of their encounter together, hand in hand. The love and desire that stands in an ironic contrast to their tentative and often clumsy courting is revealed through this split of physical action and verbal description. Moreover, the union of their bodies is turned into a metaphor for a better world, where love is straightforward, and not buried under societal conventions. The further development of the play will reveal that this remains an utopian moment.

The dominance of discourse and the breakdown of communication will reassert itself over this moment of joined interiorities.

Kriegenburg's staging of Dea Loher's *Das letzte Feuer* (Thalia Theater Hamburg, 2008) also explored the split between text and gesture for deeper metaphorical meaning. The director employed a rotating stage, on which seven rooms occupied the space like slices of cakes. The rotation was constant, so for any longer exchange, be it monologue or dialogue, the performers need to keep moving in order to remain in position vis-à-vis the audience. Consequently, the rooms behind them changed, and with them their inhabitants, and intimate confessions happened in the presence of other people. When Karoline tells Rabe about her lover Ludwig ("Er ist Fetischist. Herr Schraube, der Kunstbrustfetischist." [He's a fetishist. Mr Schraube the fetishist of artificial breasts.]) Loher 2009: 45), Ludwig and his wife Susanne are present in the room behind them in a scene of apparent normality: they are in bed, he is reading, she is thinking. But these gestures of normality become infused with additional meaning through Karoline's words and gestures. A gesture that is straightforward and metonymic in its immediate environment might take on a metaphorical meaning when applied to the other actors. If this is the case, the gesture no longer provides unproblematic access to a character's emotional subtext. Jelinek explicitly refuses this notion of metonymic subtext for her playtexts:

I don't want to see that false unity reflected in the faces of actors: the unity of life. I don't want to see that play of forces of this "well-greased muscle" (Roland Barthes)--the play of language and movement, the so-called "expression" of a well-trained actor. I don't want voice and movement to fit together. (Jelinek 1983)

We have already seen how even metonymic gestures become more complex in a metaphorical, theatrical-realist environment through Wieler's staging of *Rechnitz*. The same production also offered numerous examples of metaphoric gestures achieved through the split between gesture and text. When one of the messengers (Hildegard Schmahl) requested that "die letzte Röte muß von den Wangen weggekost [...] werden" [the last rouge has to be caressed off [...] the cheeks] (Jelinek 2009: 67), another messenger (André Jung) sucked his fingers in delectation. In itself a seemingly innocuous gesture, it becomes menacingly cannibalistic or vampiric in relation to the text and the context of the murdered Hungarian Jews, who were metaphorically 'sucked dry'. Through the use of splitting, a simple gesture can thus both retain some of its metonymic meaning (for example as an indicator of the pizza just eaten by the messengers) and take on larger metaphoric ones.

Gosch's *Vorher/Nachher* provides numerous other examples of possible ways of achieving this split between signifier and signified. When a man and a woman discuss a broken bulb in scene 6, we see the man doing push-ups on stage while describing what he does to check the bulb: "Er stellt den Stuhl unter die Lampe, steigt darauf, greift in die Lampe und dreht die Glühbirne aus der Fassung" [he positions the chair under the lamp, reaches into the lamp and screws the bulb out of the socket] (Schimmelpfennig 2004a: 406). The push-ups do not illustrate his actions, and are therefore not a metonymical part of a logical larger whole which includes the man's interiority. Nonetheless, the spectator can create a metaphoric connection between the push-ups and the man's feelings. Based on the idea of tension as the *tertium comparationis*, the push-ups then create and communicate a potential state of anxiety or pressure. Why the man would feel pressured in this situation is not explained – there is no

logical connection. But the spectator is provided with the potentiality of this pressure, and thus with a possible glimpse of the man's interiority. Sean Holmes employed a similar strategy of metaphorical signification in *Pornography* when, "at the moment of detonation, the actor simply walks off the stage, through the auditorium and disappears." (Gardner 2008, writing about the British premiere at the Traverse Theatre). A simple disappearance comes to stand for the death, not only of the suicide bomber, but of all his victims; death as unrepresentable is circumscribed in an absence. Early on in *Rechnitz*, it is greed and lust that serve as *tertium comparationis* between a description of the "Gefolgschaftsfest" [feast of followers] and the gesture of the messenger speaking (Steven Scharf):

Nur rein mit der Zunge, solange es noch geht! Und lecken,
mißverstanden werden und es wieder ausspucken.

[In, in with the tongue as long as it's still possible! And then lick, be
misunderstood, and spit it out again.] (Jelinek 2009: 58-59)

He lasciviously grabbed the naked leg of one of the female messengers (Katja Bürkle), kneading and stroking it. This physical sign of sexual lust and male force was metaphorically transposed to the participants of the "feast of followers".

The split between gesture and text can also be a temporal one, introducing a moment of asynchrony. Jelinek describes this for Johann Simons' work on her playtexts:

Vielleicht entsteht dadurch die Unschärfe, man glaubt manchmal, sie
sprechen alles zweifach, aber um ein Winziges phasenversetzt, dabei

sind sie sie selbst und gleichzeitig ein anderer. Weil sie es vor allem mit ihren Körpern [...] gesagt haben.

Maybe a haziness is created through this, you sometimes think they [the actors] speak everything twice, but phase-shifted by a minuscule amount; during this they are themselves and simultaneously someone else. Because they have said it above all through their bodies [...].
(Jelinek 2012)

We encounter such asynchrony of words and movement also in Gosch's staging of *Vorher/Nachher*. Scene 10 returns to the woman who is cheating on her long-term boyfriend we have encountered as our first example. Verbally, she describes the event of sex:

Zuerst hatte sie gedacht, sie werde es nicht genießen können, aber dann, währenddessen, überkam sie eine für sie selbst überraschende Lust [...].

[First she thought she wouldn't enjoy it, but then, in the middle of the act, she was overcome with a desire that was surprising even to her [...].] (Schimmelpfennig 2004a: 409)

However, we see them in the position *after* sex: the man asleep with his right arm crossing his breast holding his left shoulder and with his left arm in his underpants, the woman with her left arm extended over her head and reaching towards her right, and her right hand covering the breast. Not only is this pose asynchronous with the action described, it is also not a realistic representation of sleeping or resting bodies since both of them are standing. This is the metaphor of a sleeping position rather than a realistic representation of it. While the similarities are clear from the description, the metaphorical pose also

develops a strong force of difference to which excessive meaning accrues. The naked bodies of man and woman in their artificial poses, with one hand at one point covering their genitalia, remind us of paintings of Adam and Eve, and thus lead to associations with the fall from grace, and the relationship of original sin and sexuality. None of this is a direct (and even less intentional) expression or carrier of the characters' interiority – they are not aware of these meanings. But they are nonetheless present.

Perhaps it is easier to conceptualise this kind of 'meaning in excess of meaning' by drawing a parallel with what Roland Barthes calls the "*punctum*" in photography (Barthes 1980: 26). Metonymic meaning would then be analogous to Barthes "*studium*" – "which I perceive quite familiarly as a consequence of my knowledge, my culture; this field [...] always refers to a classical body of information" (ibid: 25-26). This kind of meaning is meant to be read, to be deciphered. In contrast, metaphorical meaning as a *punctum* is the "element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me" (ibid: 26). There seems to be a distinct parallel between Barthes' *punctum* and Benjamin's notion of interruption:

This second element which will disturb the *studium*, I shall therefore call *punctum*; for *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole – and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's [and by extension, a performance's, JP] *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me) (ibid: 27).

It is the same idea of difference similarity operating within metaphor that comes into play in Barthes' *punctum*. This parallel demonstrates that a more intense opacity, an indecipherability, can also be present in a visual medium. Moreover, Barthes' emphasis lies on the spectator's increased interest this

indecipherability is able to generate. In a particularly poignant moment of *punctum* in Wieler's staging of *Rechnitz*, all four messengers collapse to the floor and are heaped on top of each other. They writhe and attempt to shift to a more comfortable position while one of them (Katja Bürkle) talks about the massacre as a "sacrifice" and claims that "Das Christentum opfert grundsätzlich nichts Lebendiges" [Christianity categorically does not sacrifice anything that is alive] (Jelinek 2009: 102). In the light of the text, the audience was pierced by the heap of bodies as a metaphor for the victims of the massacre. Yet at the same time, we remained aware of the messengers' repeated identification with the perpetrators. And indeed, their gestures are not clearly ones of suffering: there is an element of control in their slow execution. Consequently, the image could also be a metaphor for the killers rolling in the blood of their victims. The metaphoric *punctum* remains opaque and denies clear identification. As we will see in my analysis of my first directing project for this dissertation, Hilling's *Black Beast Sorrow*, the *punctum* finds a further parallel in Barthes own writing on the 'grain' of the voice. Here we also encounter something "beyond (or before) the meaning of the words" (Barthes 1977: 181) which still allows us to connect to the performer, to make sense of him or her. Understanding metaphoric gestures as a *punctum* allows us to see interiority not as an 'act', as pre-given information to be deciphered, but as 'potentiality' – a field of interest full of possible meanings which we have to create.

Following Benjamin and seeing gesture as a fundamental interruption – of a flow of action as well as of the process of meaning making – has further important implications for the modes of representation of theatrical realism. In scene 40 of Gosch's *Vorher/Nachher*, the actor performing the character of "The Man with the Cufflinks" narrates and performs a soft porn movie. He plays

all the characters in it, the “fünf US-Topmodels in Shorts und bauchfreien Hemden” [five American top-models in shorts and belly tops] as well as the “US-Präsident” [president of the US] and the members of the “Sonderkommandos ASCAM” [special unit ASCAM] (Schimmelpfennig 2004a: 446). All his gestures are illustrative, but his *attitude* is that of Brecht’s “Street Scene”: “der Schauspieler muß Demonstrant bleiben” [the actor must remain a demonstrator] (Brecht 1993a: 22: 376). In this instance there is even a Brechtian element of social context involved in the demonstration, since “The Man with Cufflinks” is the owner of a small record player company which he is forced to sell. In the current situation, he is stuck in a hotel room somewhere in Asia, at the mercy of his buyers who have flown him in, and this impotence forces him to watch the soft porn movie as an act of escapism and a fantasy of control. More importantly however, the *gestus* of demonstration allows us to get a glimpse of the feelings of this character. The mounting franticness of his reenactment then becomes a metaphor for the dissolution of the image he had of himself: successful businessman, faithful son, and leader. In this context, it is not so much the individual gestures that are metaphoric, but the entire *gestus*. Brecht defines *gestus* as:

Einen ganzen Komplex einzelner Gesten der verschiedensten Art, zusammen mit Äußerungen, welcher einem absonderbaren Vorgang unter Menschen zugrunde liegt und die Gesamthaltung aller an diesem Vorgang beteiligten betrifft [...]

[a whole complex of single gestures of all kinds taken together with utterances, which underlies a process between people that can be isolated; it affects the overall attitude of all who participate in the process [...].] (Brecht 1993b: 23: 188)

It is the *attitude* more than the individual gestures that becomes metaphorical in this scene from *Vorher/Nachher*. The gestures in this performance in themselves are metonymic, but become in relation to the attitude of demonstration a nearly pure instance of the aim of Epic Theatre according to Benjamin: “Gesten zitierbar machen” [to make gestures quotable] (Benjamin 1977: 536). Metaphoric *gestus* is an expansion of the metaphoric gesture that encompasses the whole attitude of a character in a given situation.

Brecht’s use of the term ‘*gestus*’ is ambiguous and often displays subtle shifts in the chronological development and constant reshaping of his theoretical thoughts on theatre. Therefore, a brief discussion of how my understanding of *gestus* for the purpose of this thesis relates to its different but interrelated incarnations is advisable. It has already appeared that one of my main foci lies on how *gestus* can be seen as related to attitude [*Haltung*] the actor adopts towards his or her character and their relationship to the situations they experience.²³ Brecht himself establishes a connection between *gestus* und attitude when he includes in the definition of the former „die Gesamthaltung aller an diesem Vorgang Beteiligten [...] auch nur eine Grundhaltung eines Menschen“ [the overall attitude of all who participate in the event [...] or simply the basic attitude of one human being] (Brecht 1993b: 188). Hence, *gestus* also includes an element of a performative attitude, i.e. *how* a character’s actions are shown by the actor or actress. Brecht also mentions this notion of “*Abstand*” [distance] between performer and character as a central element of the *gestus* in ‘Non verbis, sed gestibus!’ (Brecht 1993i: 617). Overall, “*Gestus* appears to a

²³ “A concept which summarises these newer aims [of the post-war East Berlin years], though it was not new in Brecht’s vocabulary, is *Haltung*. This term runs empathetically through Brecht’s writings and, as Darko Suvin has argued, carries a range of meanings (‘bearing, stance, attitude, posture, behaviour and also poise and self-control’). The English term ‘attitude’ perhaps best conveys this range of physical, professional and intellectual connotations.” (Brooker 2006: 222)

remarkable instrument for unlocking the contradictions of action and character, of the individual and the social of logos and gesture, of distance and identification” (Pavis 1985: 295). I will return to this question in more detail in chapter 3 and 4.

The second aspect that my use of the concept of gestus in relation to metaphorical and metonymic representation focuses on is its interior, emotional side. At first glance, this seems to throw up certain problems, also with regard to my previous definition of the relationship between gestus and attitude. In his text on gestic music, Brecht further develops his definition of the kind of attitude that is shown in the gestus; they are “bestimmte Haltungen des Sprechenden [...], die dieser anderen Menschen gegenüber annimmt” [specific attitudes of the speaker, which he or she adopts in relation to other human beings] (Brecht 1993h: 329). The attitude displayed through gestus is seen here specifically as a relational one. It is this “gesellschaftlicher Gestus” [social gestus] that is particularly relevant to Brecht. Kenneth Fowler traces these nuances of meaning the term gestus has for Brecht in the first chapter of his book *Received Truth: Bertolt Brecht and the Problem of Gestus and Musical Meaning*. He summarizes:

there is indeed an underlying unifying idea throughout Brecht’s wrestling with this terminology. This unifying idea is the notion that consciousness is determined by social being, whatever term may be used at any particular time to express that notion as it is manifested in bodily communication. (Fowler 1991: 38).

Social context and interiority, however, do not have to be at odds, as actor Ekkehard Schall recognises: “I don’t act emotions, I present them as ways of behaviour. Brecht’s term here would be *Gestus*. And when you fill behaviour

with emotion, that's when you get passionate, or intense or vital" (cit. in: Eddershaw 2006: 288). He establishes an important connection between (social) behaviour and (interior) emotions. This is not to say that Brecht's *gestus* is wholly or even largely concerned with emotions, only that they form one element within this complex concept. As Fowler highlights, that there is a mixture of two different viewpoints even in Brecht's own understanding of *gestus*, "that of the bourgeois individualist and that of the Marxist materialist" (Fowler 1991: 29). It therefore seems permissible to focus on the more individualist aspects of *gestus*, especially since this aspect is more strongly present in many the contemporary German playwrights that I am investigating in this thesis.

Gestus in the performance of *Rechnitz* is perhaps most closely related to Brecht's emphasis on social relationships. The attitude of the figures adopted by the performers towards the situations they report plays a fundamental role in the audience's reception of these situations.. When the performers enter the stage at the beginning of the play, they do so in an easy, relaxed jog, which they keep up once they have reached the edge of the stage. They smile and wave to the audience. This *gestus* of entertaining and complicity defines their performance throughout and thus becomes a metaphor for the relationship of the (German and/or Austrian) society at large to the atrocities of the Holocaust. The text mentions the idea of 'Sündenstolz' (pride in your sins), and we can identify elements of such a pride in the smiling, easy-going way the messengers narrate the terrible events.

We encounter another example of *gestus* in Kriegenburg's staging of *Das letzte Feuer*. The tone of the actors playing "We" is that of the *witness* – not fully

implicated in the events, but close enough to be moved by them²⁴. The chorus as witness is obviously very close to the witness of Brecht's "Street Scene", and indeed they are 'quoting' their words and gestures more than identifying with them. Hence, the actors speak with a mixture of pathos/indignation and distanced jadedness. Sandra Flubacher, one of the two actresses exclusively playing the WIR chorus, displayed a minimalistic body language during the play's first narration, where we learn about the circumstances of Edgar's death. At some point she even began to smoke, which in this context appears like a tongue-in-cheek reference to Brecht's "Smoking Theatre"²⁵. The emphasis lies not on deciphering her inner life, but on what she has to tell us. This distance is even motivated on the level of content, since it emerged at the end that all characters are either dead, in a mental asylum, or have moved away. The story we all witnessed until now was hence told retrospectively. Their *gestus* of quoting and narrating is aimed at an exploration of inter-subjectivity – not only between the characters, but also between audience and characters – in place of one coherent subjectivity. Narration in choric or monologic passages represents the attempt to explain oneself, to find an objective attitude towards one's own subjectivity. Consequently, the minimalistic gestures of the distanced chorus are juxtaposed or interspersed with more traditionally metonymic gestures. The first time we see the policewoman Edna, she is biting her nails – a sign of nervousness that characterises the way she constantly reproaches herself of being responsible for Edgar's death by initiating the car chase. She delivers her section of the first narration, the description of this chase, in a position of

²⁴ compare also scene 20 in *faust hat hunger*

²⁵ Brecht repeatedly discussed the distanced contemplative attitude related to smoking, for example in his 'Anmerkungen zur Dreigroschenoper' (Brecht 1993c: 24: 59). As a consequence, he suggested "smoking theatre" as an alternative name for Epic Theatre.

tension, sitting on the edge of an arm chair's arm rest, bent forwards as if she could not wait to impart her knowledge, to confess herself.

Kriegenburg's staging mixes metaphorical and metonymical modes of representation. By doing so, he does not cut off the audience's opportunity to gain access to the characters' interiority, but he opens the process of this meaning making up to questions and doubts. As a result, everyday gestures and facial expressions – Lessing's nuances, which were formerly the prime examples of metonymic gestures – are infused with meaning above and beyond their own semiotic value – instead of interiority expressing itself through the action, narration allows the audience to discover potential interiority beyond the action. In this way, the metaphorical relationship between text and gesture puts the claim of both aspects to represent reality into doubt; neither words nor gestures provide stable access to interiority any longer. Words and actions question each other and hint at wider potential for meaning; meaning is not directly stated, but circumscribed in the tension between them. The metaphoric relationship emerges very clearly in the way Kriegenburg stages Ludwig's killing of his elderly mother Rosemarie while he is giving her a bath. She pre-empts the drowning by putting her head under water on her own initiative. Subsequently, this everyday action (she could be just washing her hair) is filled with meaning through the narration of how her son drowns her in the bath. The fact that Rosemarie herself is narrating these events evades a simple illustration of the narration. Instead, the unspeakable act of killing is generated in the circumscribed blank space between the simple act of putting her head underwater and the description of the events. Ludwig's hand on her head during the narration similarly becomes a pregnant metaphor for his agency in this murder.

My analysis of the relationship between dialogue and metonymic gestures in dramatic realism and narration and metaphorical gestures in theatrical realism has shown the two forms of physical representation as overlapping tendencies. What is gained heuristically by differentiating between the two is a greater understanding of how they conceptualise their respective representations of the world, and how words and gestures work together to create this representation. The metonymic mode of representation posits the wholeness of a model of reality held together by logic, and consequently allows and necessitates logical deciphering and deduction. Its prime state is the 'act', the instantaneous realisation, the meaning-making potential of word and gesture. Metaphorical representation, on the other hand, shows us several possible worlds. And indeed, 'potentiality' becomes more important in this mode of representation. It does not completely replace the 'act', but comes to exist alongside and within it. Where several possible worlds exist, each world in itself can be metonymic: a gesture or a phrase can be clearly read as an expression of a certain state of interiority. However, theatrical realism highlights the *context* in which these readings are possible. Metonymy is tied to a specific situation; its meaning can be questioned or even contradicted in another situation, where another possible world is shown. In spite of these different tendencies, metonymic and metaphorical gestures share a common territory and can shade into each other.

In fact, one of the key realisations that has emerged in this chapter is the hybridity of both British and German-language plays. Categorisations such as dramatic realism, dialogue and metonymic gesture on the one hand and theatrical realism, narration and metaphorical gesture on the other can only ever identify tendencies and clusters of theatrical conventions across text and

performance. Playwrights, actors, and directors frequently mix these modes of representation in their creation, and it is indeed in their interaction and overlap that the truly complex cases of meaning-making are created. It has become clear that stylistic diversity in the texts invites a corresponding stylistic diversity in the performances. Theatrical traditions and norms are still operational, but there seems to be an overall tendency towards eclecticism. The categories introduced in this chapter should help to raise the awareness of the complex interaction between text and performance and to identify a larger range of fruitful combinations between specific formal features of these two aspects of theatre. For example, we have seen how any representation of interiority has to engage with the problem of how to define and construct subjecthood and the relation between self and world. On the textual level, narration can represent subjecthood as fragmented and in the constant process of construction. Metaphorical gestures can then express a similar searching tentativeness on the performative level. The combination of narration and metaphorical gestures can then lead to a greater prominence of the *performer* within this representation of interiority – an aspect to which I will return in chapters 3 and 4. Finally, the analyses of this chapter should have brought out the representational possibilities of potentiality in all its forms. Theatre is not only defined through a representation of what is, but also through the simultaneously play with what could have been. If we follow Agamben, this quality of constantly hovering on the edge between thought and realisation is what defines theatre, particularly in our modern age.

Given the already present possibilities of this formal hybridity, I therefore see the open mixture of metaphorical and metonymic representation, of “Natürlichkeit und Manier” [naturalness and mannerism] (Agamben 1992: 100)

as a unique chance for a blend of German and British modes of representation to represent our modern world. It allows us as a spectator to find meaning within more codified and conventional gestures as well as in gestures that are more opaque, that intimate to say more than we can immediately grasp. Moreover, it puts the onus of meaning-making on us: if intentionality is no longer crucial for a movement to be interpreted as a gesture, and if the coherence in time, space, character, and meaning becomes fragmented, then it is up to us to establish and interpret connections and associations according to our own predispositions.

CHAPTER 2: The translation of theatrical realist texts

Translating strategies, not words

It would be impossible to consider German-language plays in a British cultural context without paying attention to the question of translation. After the theoretical considerations of chapter 1, this second chapter is a first step towards a more practical investigation of the texts and their performances. I will use my own collaborative translation of Jelinek's *Rechnitz* as a way to question existing norms in Anglo-American translations for the stage. I will demonstrate how these norms are a continuation of the assumptions that form the basis of dramatic realism. In translation studies the influence of the demand for the wholeness of the model of reality expresses itself in the normative categories of fluidity, speakability, performability and in the corresponding tendency towards what Venuti calls "domestication" (Venuti 1995: 6), i.e. the alignment of foreign texts and their formal features with the norms of the culture into whose language the text is translated. An analysis of existing translations of Jelinek will help to contextualise this claim.

Parallel to my conclusion in chapter 1, that a difference in the form of the texts often corresponds to a difference in the form of the performance, my collaborative translation of *Rechnitz* then aims to show that texts that tend more towards theatrical realism also necessitate a different approach in translation. Such an approach would recognise and attempt to recreate the complexity, multiplicity and fragmentation of these texts in the other language. I will draw on the concept of foreignisation and of a mischievous treatment of language as a counter-movement to domestication. Such a foreignisation consciously challenges fluidity and its related norms by introducing new and unusual

patterns into the language of the translations – patterns that are inspired by the structure and form of the original text. Finally, I propose to investigate how an interplay between foreignisation and domestication could work, for example by extending translation to the non-verbal elements of the performance and by harnessing the dialogue between a translator working in his second language and directors and actors as a group of native speakers. Restricting my examination largely to my own practice as a translator results in some limitations, especially with regard to the possible range of solutions that already exists with regard to the translation of postdramatic texts. At the same time, however, this very limitation will also allow me to test my theories in a practical context, thus making them more applicable for those interested in actually transposing German-language plays to a British theatrical context.

As we have seen in chapter 1, the postdramatic nature of Elfriede Jelinek's playtexts sits at odds with the still dominant tradition of social realism in British theatre. Theatre without drama, "without the representation of a closed-off fictional cosmos, the mimetic staging of a fable" (Lehmann 2006: 3), is still a rarity in the established venues, especially when it comes to plays, even though it is already present in devised performances or other new forms of theatre in Britain. The very idea of transferring theatrical realist texts with strong postdramatic elements into British theatre culture therefore often seems like a daunting or downright impossible task. This is not due to some kind of general cultural incompatibility: "There is clearly no cultural problem staging German-language plays in translation – as long, however, as their dramaturgies conform to what is possible to perform on the British stage" (Barnett 2010: 161). Barnett here refers to playwrights such as Lukas Bärfuss or Marius von Mayenburg, and this could be extended to Loher or Hilling. Instead, the problem lies in the form

of the playtexts, for example their use of narration and the questions this raises for a performance. However, Barnett also underlines that these perceived problems, stemming from “questions of taste and indeed cultural bigotry” can only “provide a convenient fig-leaf for the shortcomings of a theatrical system and not its audience” (ibid: 161). This has been reinforced by the recent successful staging of Jelinek’s *Ein Sportstück* in English as *Sports Play* (Just a Must Theatre 2012).

A transposition of Jelinek’s plays thus is not as impossible as it might seem, if we think about the text not only as an isolated artefact, but also about the larger cultural context of its production and reception. I will investigate how the translator can play a crucial role in this process as a cultural mediator, drawing not only on the text but also on corresponding methodologies of staging. I will demonstrate how practical work in a collaborative translation process throws a new light on recurrent issues of drama translation such as 1) issues of fidelity, not so much to the text as to the culturally dominant mode of performance for example with regard to ‘speakability’; 2) the possible relationships between foreignising and domesticating strategies; 3) the question of the materiality of language in contradistinction to its meaning; 4) the possibility of what Patrice Pavis calls “intersemiotic translation”: a translation “between the preverbal [...] and verbal systems” (Pavis 1989: 33f) which utilises metaphoric gestures as described above; and lastly 5) problems and potentials of translating into a second language in the context of collaborative translation for the stage. Indeed, I will illustrate with references to my collaborative translation work on Elfriede Jelinek’s *Rechnitz*²⁶, how the more metaphorical

²⁶ All further references to the text will be to the two often quite distinct translation drafts that resulted from my work with two companies. Both versions are based on a first literal draft made by me, which also included variants and comments. ‘Version O’ was submitted to an intense

relationship of language and gesture in theatrical realist texts also necessitate a different approach in translation. Throughout, my discussion of the translation of theatrical realist texts will critically interrogate the still current dominance of the notion of ‘fluidity’ in Anglo-American translation theory.²⁷

In interviews with British newspapers Jelinek herself expressed a concern “that her works were ‘untranslatable’ and that English audiences would never understand them” and emphasised that she was “a provincial writer, doomed to stay that way” (cit. in: Kavenna 2004: 27). She states: “I play with the sound of language. That can hardly be translated into another language. Each language has its own face and its own fingerprints, which are not identical with any other language” (ibid: 27). Given her own experience in translation (and of such complex authors as Thomas Pynchon), these remarks seem deliberately provocative.²⁸ In fact, Wolfgang Görtschacher reminds us that “however limited, one way or another, Jelinek’s British impact as a playwright has been, her fiction has been translated into English with great success” (Görtschacher 2004: 475). Consequently, I want to counter Jelinek’s own claim of untranslatability by suggesting that this is only an untranslatability by current drama translation practice that corresponds to the dominance of dramatic realism in the British theatrical culture at large. As Benjamin points out, it is

linguistic reworking through discussions with Donnacadh O’Brian. Subsequently, we rehearsed this version with the actors, and proposed specific sections for improvisation and change. ‘Version C’ is the result of an entirely open and collaborative process with Hester Chillingworth and her actors, who all participated in the readings and provided suggestions from the beginning. Also, I will only quote from the German original from now on where it is necessary to draw out issues of translations, since our work with the actors mostly used one of the two translations.

²⁷ Venuti argues that in the Anglo-American context, a translated text is acceptable if it “reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent” (Venuti 1995: 1). Fluidity creates the appearance that a text is not translated “but the ‘original’” (ibid: 1). Consequently, it can be said: “the more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator” (ibid:).

²⁸ An analysis of Jelinek’s own translation strategies could provide useful suggestions for how to approach her work, but lies beyond the core concerns of my thesis.

precisely the complexity of a language that provides the translator with a rich set of options:

Je weniger Wert und Würde seine Sprache hat, je mehr es Mitteilung ist, desto weniger ist für die Übersetzung dabei zu gewinnen, bis das völlige Übergewicht jenes Sinnes, weit entfernt, der Hebel einer formvollen Übersetzung zu sein, diese vereitelt.

[The lower the quality and distinction of its language, the greater the extent to which it is information, the less fertile a field it is for translation, until the utter preponderance of content, far from being the lever for a translation of distinctive mode, renders it impossible.] (Benjamin 1972: 20)

Benjamin's idea of the translatability of complex linguistic play is based on a notion radically different to the emphasis on fluidity in the target language. Instead of aiming towards a text that reads as if it was written in the target language (what Lawrence Venuti calls 'domestication'), Benjamin follows Rudolf Pannwitz who postulates that "der grundsätzliche irrtum des übertragenden ist dass er den zufälligen stand der eigenen sprache festhält anstatt sie durch die fremde sprache gewaltig bewegen zu lassen" [sic] [the basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue] (cit. in: Benjamin 1972: 20). The complex nature of Jelinek's playtexts, their puns and semantic slippages, should be regarded not so much as problems that can never be fully resolved, but as opportunities for a translation that encounters her writing on its own terms with playful, witty, and mischievous *esprit*.

Jelinek's language repeatedly employs a whole series of punning slippages to transform a seemingly innocuous word into something with sinister and often brutal connotations, thereby exposing how our everyday language still betrays underlying patterns of violence, historical ignorance, and callousness. Crucially, it is the language which carries the performative emphasis, as Jelinek underlines: "I have written plays in which the characters are constituted by their speech, and as long as they are speaking, they exist, but whenever they cease to speak, they also cease to exist." (cit. in: Bethmann 2000: 66). This stands in sharp contrast to the conventions of British drama, which Snell-Hornby describes as follows:

The basic theatrical sign is visual and/or acoustic, but not verbal. The verbal is secondary and indirect, valid not in isolation or in its own right, but only in virtue of its position within a constellation of non-verbal factors, commonly called the dramatic situation. (Snell-Hornby 1997: 189)

Snell-Hornby is here describing how dialogue *is* action, analogous to my earlier analysis. I am not suggesting that the visual aspect is not relevant in performances of Jelinek's plays. However, its relationship to the verbal is quite different – there is no "dramatic situation" that clearly defines how the verbal and the non-verbal interact. Instead, the verbal occupies a position equal to the visual, not only in its meaning, but also in its sound, its materiality. The translation of such a text can therefore no longer be shaped by any perceived demands of the "dramatic situation", but has to remain true to the newly found verbal independence. Rather than emptying out the potentiality of the text into clear dramatic actions, the translator has to be careful to preserve the play of potentialities to be explored by director and actors.

Speakability and dissidence

The very transfer of Jelinek's playtexts into the British theatrical context in itself is a consciously foreignising challenge. According to playwright and translator Steve Gooch, British dramatic realism is not concerned with an intellectual engagement with ideas nor with more experiential forms of theatre, but seems "stuck in the literal-minded deception of everyday class-conscious reality which made metaphor impossible"; its central "limitation was in the dialogue" (Gooch 1996: 14-15). Whilst this statement is certainly polemical, I have already demonstrated that the identification of dramatic realism as the dominant form even today is not an isolated position. The function of language is centred around the communication of meaning and a simultaneous concealment of its constructedness. Language in theatrical realist plays such as Jelinek's, however, often "appears not as the speech of characters – if there are still definable characters at all – but as an autonomous theatricality" (Lehmann 2006: 18). Language is embraced as an area to play with metaphors and philosophical ideas, emotions, and sensory affect. Critics of the first British production of a play by Jelinek, *Services or They All Do It* [original title: *Raststätte oder Sie machens alle*] at the Gate Theatre in 1996, have consistently rejected her work on the basis of a different understanding of language, primed by a dramatic realist model of reality as wholeness and a notion of fluidity that favours a critical engagement with content over a critical (and hence often non-fluid, fragmented, broken, and difficult) use of language. *Evening Standard* critic Nick Curtis calls her language an "arrogantly undynamic rant" as well as an "authorial indulgence, a disdain for making things clear and

accessible excused by the belief that the work is challenging” (cit. in: Görtzschacher 2004: 477). Such assessments disregard the new opportunities offered by narration that I have explored earlier on. In such an environment, my treatment of language in the translation of *Rechnitz* is therefore informed by what Venuti calls “dissidence”:

On the one hand, foreignizing translation enacts an ethnocentric appropriation of the foreign text by enlisting it in a domestic cultural political agenda, like dissidence; on the other hand, it is precisely this dissident stance that enables foreignizing translation to signal the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text and perform a work of cultural restoration, admitting the ethnodeviant and potentially revising domestic literary canons. (Venuti 1995: 148)

My aim in translating *Rechnitz* is to challenge the limits placed on translation practices by the dominance of dramatic realism within British theatre. Other translations of Jelinek’s texts often subscribe to more domesticating strategies, often without acknowledging these openly. This becomes readily visible in Tinch Minter’s translation of *What Happened After Nora Left Her Husband* (1994) [original title: *Was geschah, nachdem Nora ihren Mann verlassen hatte*]. Instead of engaging with the difficult language of the play and its many intertextual references, the translator decides to radically cut the text to the point of making the original form unrecognizable.²⁹ The aim clearly is to bring the play in line with British conventions of fluid and active dialogue. However, it is especially the formal innovativeness of the text that is provocative in a British

²⁹ For example, Minter cuts the Freud quotation on page 16, and the whole following section: “Vor einer Maschine muß der Mensch zu einem Nichts werden, erst dann kann er wieder zu einem Etwas werden. Ich allerdings wählte von Anfang an den beschwerlicheren Weg zu einer Karriere“ (Jelinek 1992: 9). Examples like this abound – the English version (cf. Castledine 1994: Minter’s translation is nearly 30 pages shorter than the German version in a similar layout).

context. Eva Espasa points out that “the tension between ‘artificiality’ and ‘naturalism’ in theatre practices is parallel to tensions in translation studies about the fluency of the translated text” (Espasa 2000: 53). Minter introduces a fluency into Jelinek’s play that is not part of the original text. Her cuts include most of the theoretical digressions in the play and favour the intellectually less intense sections of direct dialogue.

Gitta Honegger’s complex and erudite American translation of *Totenauerg* under the title of *Death/Valley/Summit* presents an approach to translation that differs markedly from Minter’s. Where Minter does not indicate the cuts in her translation, Honegger is careful to give a translation of the complete playtext as published by Jelinek, and to indicate cuts through square brackets: “Bracketed dialogue indicates cuts made for the first performance, at the Vienna Burgtheater” (Honegger 1996: 222). In her ‘Translator’s Note’, Honegger also explicitly engages with the linguistic, political, philosophical and historical complexity of Jelinek’s language; Minter does not provide such a preface. Since the main intertext of *Totenauerg* is Heidegger’s *The Question Concerning Technology* (cp. *ibid*: 219), the translator had to tackle not only the specific philosophical meanings that Heidegger attached to many terms, but also Jelinek’s linguistic play with them, which mostly uses the root of a word as a ‘springboard’ for associations with related words. For example, Jelinek transforms Heidegger’s “Gestell” (“framing”; cp. *ibid*: 220) into “G’stell” (which, “in popular Viennese usage, is a (sexist) term for a ‘great body’”, *ibid*: 220). For Honegger, being faced with these seemingly untranslatable passages reveals how “the problems of translation inherent in this play ironically highlight the most devastating aspects of Jelinek’s cultural critique” (*ibid*: 220). In order to activate this critique in her translation, Honegger employs a range of different methods

that often interrupt dominant notions of fluidity. For example, she includes the original German phrase and immediately follows it up with a translation (“Die Natur ruht. Nature rests.”, Jelinek 1996a: 227). In another instance, she imitates the “dazzling new formations of compound words” of the German language (Honegger 1996: 220), when she translates “Auschützer” and “Au-Schützen” (literally: ‘protector of meadows’ and ‘people shooting in meadows’, with a possible pun on “Au” (‘meadow’) as the German expression for ‘ouch’) as “wildlifeguards” and “wetlandlords” (Jelinek 1996a: 228). Honegger’s conscious turning away from fluency towards foreignisation demonstrate a model of translation different from the one represented by Minter.³⁰ The methodologies that I adopted in the course of my own work will be shown as closely related to this model.

The tension between Jelinek’s texts and an Anglo-American demand of fluency is also reflected in the emphasis on ‘speakability’ or the overarching category of ‘performability’ in discussions about translation for the British stage. Indeed, Susan Bassnett highlights that “the term ‘performability’ appears to emerge at the same time as the naturalist drama, and is consequently linked to ideas of consistency in characterisation and to the notion of the gestural subtext” (Bassnett 1998: 95). Performability also describes the language of dialogue as the language of actions: texts are ‘performable’ if they suggest

³⁰ Nick Grindell’s translation of *Raststätte Oder Sie Machens Alle* as *Services or They all do it* (1996) also tends less towards fluency than Minter’s *What Happened After Nora Left Her Husband*. It presents the text in full with no cuts and does not change the original Austrian setting (e.g. in the place references). Grindell’s text includes some overly literal translations and the occasional awkward or mistranslated phrase (for example “I’ll say what I’ve thought out [...]” (Jelinek 1996b: 69) instead of ‘I’ll say what I’ve come up with’ for “Ich sage, was ich mir ausgedacht habe [...]” (Jelinek 1997a: 74); or “veil of rain” instead of ‘waterproofs’ (Jelinek 1996b: 87) for “Regenhaut” (Jelinek 1997a: 90)). Overall however, he translates Jelinek’s wordplays remarkably well and keeps the strangeness of her language intact by opting for a more foreignizing translation.

The most recent translations of Jelinek’s work into English is *Sportsplay* by Penny Black (published 2012). Gitta Honegger’s translations of *Rechnitz* and *Die Kontrakte des Kaufmanns* (*The Merchant’s Contracts*) is scheduled to be published in 2013.

dynamic changes of situation. As Anderman recognises, the core problem “of staging European work in translation is the frequent treatment of the plays as if they have been written for the prevailing English acting and directorial style” (Anderman 2005: 323). I have already pointed out how such an approach becomes fundamentally untenable in relation to theatrical realist texts. Jelinek’s theatrical language is crucially not the fluid, easily speakable language of the well-made play and thus violates – even in the original – one of Corrigan’s fundamental assumptions about language in theatre: “The first law in translating for the theater is that everything must be speakable” (Corrigan 1961: 101). Jelinek’s textual surfaces do not have the same attributes Snell-Hornby ascribes to dramatic dialogue and therefore these attributes can also no longer serve to define the task of the translator:

Der Theaterdialog muß gleichzeitig scheinbar entgegengesetzte Eigenschaften besitzen: er muß sowohl klar als auch rätselhaft sein; er muß leicht und schnell verstanden werden, aber auch Spannung erzeugen. Er muß vollständige Informationen zum Bühnengeschehen liefern, gleichzeitig aber unvollständig sein, Raum lassen für eine schauspielerische Darstellung.

[Theatrical dialogue has to have apparently opposed characteristics simultaneously: it must be both clear and enigmatic; it must be understood easily and quickly, but also create suspense. It must provide a complete set of information about the events on stage, but at the same time must be incomplete, must leave room for the actors’ performance.]
(Snell-Hornby 1984: 105)

In contrast, Jelinek’s theatrical text consciously overcharges both audience and actors through the multitude of information, the enigmatic flow of associations,

the lack of suspense, and its refusal to delineate the stage. Pavis recognises that the “demand for a playable or speakable text can [...] lead to a norm of the well-spoken, or to a facile simplification of the rhetoric or phrasing or of a ‘properly’ articulated performance by an actor” (Pavis 1989: 30). In *Rechnitz* the carefully controlled communication of meaning via ‘proper’ speaking is in conflict with an unruly language that shapes personae through the struggle it confronts them with. The way the sentences lead the speakers on a slippery path of association that often brings up the repressed and the unconscious – what the personae wanted to hide from their audience – evokes the perpetrators for whom they speak: “Dabei verwenden wir nur beste Keramik und bestes Gold, in Austria von der Ögussa, die früher Degussa geheißen und Gas für Menschen geliefert hat, oder verwechsle ich da was?” (Jelinek 2009: 72) [And we only use the best ceramic and the best gold, in Austria and from the Ögussa company, which was formerly known as Degussa and supplied gas for humans, or am I confusing things?” (Jelinek 2011a: 5)] These personae are furthermore formed by the violence of the uninterrupted flow of the sentences which *creates* the killers’ brutality, fever, and frenzy rather than psychologically explaining it:

Mit ihren Armen packt sie, die Frau Gräfin meine ich, die Frau Margit, die Frau Gräfin Margit, so kann man das gewiß nicht sagen, sie packt also seine linke Hand, die linke Hand von dem Mann da, nicht wahr, nein, nicht wahr!, sie könnte auch seine rechte ergreifen, aber Rechte hat er schon längst keine mehr, also die linke packt sie, den Fuß stemmt sie in seine Rippen, das darf sie, schließlich hat sie ja auch geschossen, sie reißt ihm die Schulter aus dem Arm, das Schultergelenk, aber bitte, das wäre doch nicht nötig gewesen! (Jelinek 2009: 110)

[With her arms she grabs his left hand, I mean My Lady the Countess, Lady Margit, Countess Margit, I'm sure you don't say it like that, right, she grabs his left hand, the left hand of the man over there, right, no, not right!, she could also grab his right hand, but she doesn't have the right hand anymore, so, she grabs the left hand, braces herself against his ribs with her foot and rips out the shoulder from his arm, the shoulder joint, she's allowed to, after all she shot him, but please, it wasn't necessary!] (Jelinek 2011a: 14)

Since Jelinek's language is designed to be a challenge for the performers, the principle of 'speakability' can no longer guide a translation of her texts. In jettisoning 'speakability', translation also ceases "to be a vehicle for the illusion of theatre" and instead becomes "an instrument [...] which exposes the artificiality of theatre" (Espasa 2000: 55). In this way, translation can become another element within the set theatrical realist methodologies.

Foreignisation and domestication

So far I might have given the impression that I am wholly in favour of a foreignising approach in my dissident stance towards British theatre. In fact, I am more interested in a flexible relationship between foreignising and domesticating, one that allows a translation to challenge existing traditions whilst at the same time entering into communication and exchange with them.

Like David Johnston, I am convinced that

what translation can do most powerfully in this regard is to promote hybridity, a hybrid text that simultaneously moves between and across different histories and geographies, locating and uprooting the historical

and cultural imagination of the spectator in a way that seeks to overcome the twin separations implied by aloofness and subjection. (Johnston 2011: 19)

I have already underlined how most of the German-language playtexts are in themselves hybrids combining dramatic and postdramatic elements. We can also see instances of such a hybridity in the German context of productions of Jelinek's plays, which have not always fully discarded a naturalistic, Stanislavskian approach. Jossi Wieler, who directed the premiere of *Rechnitz* at the Münchner Kammerspiele in 2008, for example, encouraged "Versuche, 'Psychologie zu erfinden, wo es keine gibt' [...], wohl wissend, daß es hier um ein 'anderes Theater' geht" [attempts to 'invent psychology where there is none' [...], fully aware that it's a question of a 'different kind of theatre' here.] (Kurzenberger 2011b: 130). We will see that similar encounters between realistic, psychological approaches and postdramatic ones occurred during our rehearsals of my translation of *Rechnitz*.

My collaborative translation work consisted of two separate rehearsal processes. With Irish director Donnacadh O'Briain we started with a detailed examination of the translation without the actors. On the basis of my literal translation, which consciously attempted to stick as close as possible to the German sentence structure and grammar (for example in the more frequent use of nouns), I provided several paraphrases of the sentences' content and explained the historical and cultural context, implications, and affective quality of the numerous allusions, particularly as encapsulated by the ambiguous language games the author employs. O'Briain then suggested several options that would capture these ambiguities more succinctly and idiomatically, and also corrected grammatical mistakes. From these options, we would choose the

version that would be closest to the original German, embracing strange or poetic expressions as effects appropriate to the strategies of Jelinek's text. This revised version was finally workshopped with three actresses (Charlotte Moore, Emily Sidonie, and Catherine Cusack – later replaced by Susie Riddell) and two actors (Peter Stickney and Rory Murray, later replaced by Phil Nightingale). In the second rehearsal process with director Hester Chillingworth and her actors (Craig Hamblyn, Jennifer Pick, and Lucy McCormick), my initial literal translation was taken directly as the foundation for a joined discussion and practical try-out. The director and the actors together suggested versions for the translation on the basis of their experience in reading the text and my answers to their questions about content and context. Surprisingly, both rehearsal processes often led to similar results, even though Chillingworth's group has a stronger background in devising and work with groups such as Forced Entertainment, whereas O'Briain's group was more classically trained.

Most importantly, it emerged that it is the playful and formally experimental strategies of the text rather than words or sentences which shape the translation: "it is the experiential rather than a linguistic loyalty which binds translator to source text" (Johnston 1996: 95). Such an approach recognises the potentiality hidden within the words and activates them rather than subscribing to the need of dramatic realism to define its aspects in a concrete way. In accordance with Venuti's caveat that "the 'foreign' in foreignising translation is not a transparent representation of an essence that resides in the foreign text" (Venuti 1995: 20), foreignisation in the rehearsed translation turned out to be not a 'truthful' embodiment of the German, and nor was domestication pure English. Instead, the *interplay* between foreignising and domesticating strategies opened up the text to a mischievous treatment of language in line

with the author's own mischievousness. As Chillingworth put it, the task is "not to serve the German language or the English language, but to serve the text" (cit. in Peters 2010). This fidelity to Jelinek's strategies of writing rather than individual words can be identified with Philip E. Lewis' concept of 'abusive fidelity':

It acknowledges the abusive, equivocal relationship between the translation and the foreign text and eschews a fluent strategy in order to reproduce in the translation whatever features of the foreign text abuse or resist dominant cultural values in the source language. Abusive fidelity directs the translator's attention away from the conceptual signified to the play of signifiers on which it depends [...]. (cit. in: Venuti 1995: 24)

The ability to turn the focus away from content and towards form makes 'abusive fidelity' particularly useful in approaching theatrical realist plays. In my translation of *Rechnitz*, for example, it therefore was appropriate to perform several versions of one sentence. What originally occurred as an accident (rehearsal O'Briain 06/12/10) turned out to be a useful method in encircling the linguistic field of Jelinek's language games. Thus, the nearly untranslatable sentence "Der Herr Geschichtsprofessor wieder läßt Ihnen durch sein Klitterungsklistier von der Rückseite her [...] ausrichten" (Jelinek 2009: 58) becomes

The esteemed Professor of History, for his part, sends you the message through his enema-apparatus of historical misrepresentation – from behind, since you only see people in flight from behind... / The esteemed Professor of History, on his part, takes it the wrong way and shoves it into you from behind... / The esteemed Professor of History, on his part, drops into your mind... (Jelinek 2011a: 3)

The speakers are all messengers struggling for the right expression, and this linguistic insecurity is captured in the multiple versions. Later, one speaker explicitly says:

Ein Wort, das dafür oft benutzt wird, ein anderes fällt mir im Moment nicht ein. Als Bote sollte ich stets über mehrere Worte verfügen, die ich bereithalten müßte, aber die Worte sind ineinandergefügt und danach so verfugt worden, wie ich ja bereits berichtet habe, daß ich sie dort jetzt nicht mehr rauskriege. (Jelinek 2009: 96)

[That word's often used for this, at the moment I cannot think of any others. As a messenger I should have several words at my disposal, which I should keep ready, but as I reported, the words are fitted together and then irredeemably grouted.] (Jelinek 2011a: 12)

The variation of words is an integral part of Jelinek's writing strategy already present in the German original. Therefore, any translation that uses a comparable method remains true to the original text's intentions. Such an experimental or, as I called it earlier, playful approach to translation ultimately also allows the production's performance to fully harness the actors' inventive capacities. Again, it is the humorous, indeed often corny nature of Jelinek's text that brings out a corresponding creativity. In the third rehearsal with O'Briain (16/12/10), we confronted the actors with the sentence quoted above, and asked them to come up with alternative solutions to translate "Klitterungsklistier". After an initial phase of feeling uncomfortable (they said they felt "as in an exam"), a playful competition to top each other's scatological expressions resulted in the following suggestions:

...inserted the message with his rectum cleaning device...

...douches you with his historically inaccurate message, anally...

...collonically irritates you with his twisted history...

...slips his warped histories into you from behind...

...douches you with distorted denial... (Jelinek 2011a: 3)

Once the humour and brutality of the scatological expression was established as the main aim of Jelinek's pun, the practical process of exchange between the domesticating idiomatic suggestions informed and shaped by foreignising historical context created translations paralleling Jelinek's narrative strategies.

The materiality of the text

A translation that is guided by the writing strategies of the source text has to take into account the materiality of the text. Rhythm, pitch, tone, and energy assume a greater and more openly acknowledged importance in theatrical realist texts than they have in dramatic realism. The playfulness of Jelinek's language brings the materiality of language into focus by opening it up to different modes of embodiment and interpretation. Whereas the intended effect of texts from the realm of dramatic realism harnesses the materiality for a specific effect – to create the impression of wholeness in its representation of world – Jelinek's complex and meandering language highlights the need for the director and the actors to continuously interpret and perform sound and rhythm anew, according to the shifting strategies adopted by the text. Thus, even a first reading with an arbitrary allocation of text in which each actor read one sentence already led the actors to the creation of rudimentary roles. These were defined by discourse tactics, and often informed by roles in our society that

have a recognizable function transported by voice and/or physical stance, for example, news reader, advertisement speaker (rehearsal Chillingworth 03/12/10) or petty bureaucrat (rehearsal O'Briain 06/12/10). The actors' instinctive performative approach backs up my earlier post-structuralist identification of representation and interiority being relocated to a discursive universe (cp. chapter 1). Consequently, the translation is no longer restricted by notions of character cohesion, by the sense that a certain character would not use a specific expression. In relation to this, our understanding of what 'materiality' of language means needs to be extended to the discourse tactics mentioned above – different intonations and rhythms that the actors bring *to* the text as much as they arise *from* the text.

Our rehearsals also demonstrated that the need for logical cohesion dominant in dramatic realism and its translation runs contrary to the effects created in *Rechnitz*. The text consciously undermines clear-cut meaning through ambiguities, associative jumps, and puns. Any attempt to turn this disjointedness into the kind of fluid text so characteristic of Anglo-American writing completely distorts the way the text operates formally. Jelinek's narration cannot simply be turned into dialogue, even where dialogic elements can be identified. In the third rehearsal with O'Briain's group (16/12/10), Sidonie attempted to perform the section starting "Ich soll berichten, daß die Gewehre auf die Zimmer gebracht wurden [...]" (Jelinek 2009: 92) [I'm told to report that rifles were brought to your rooms [...]] (Jelinek 2011a: 10-11) as coherent and logical as possible. Sitting in a circle, she established eye contact with her audience and tried to explain with sincerity and empathy what had happened during the massacre of Rechnitz. However, while her intonation suggested a dialogic structure, the playtext did not conform to it. Moreover, her empathy and

identification sounded fake in the face of the slipperiness of the facts presented. As a result, the imposition of a veneer of logic actually led to a complete falling apart of the text. A similar result was achieved when we tried to structure the text through punctuation and separate it into smaller sentence units.³¹ Immediately, the precarious urgency of the delivery dissolved, and what had been a desperate struggle for meaning turned into a vacuous statement of the apparently factual. The truncation of the longer sentences into smaller units also proved unnecessary on a performative level; all actors expressed a familiarity with a thought developing over several sub-clauses, strategies used by writers such as Shakespeare or Martin Crimp. Identifying similarities in performative methodologies can be crucial in the process of transferring a play to another culture; we will see the full implications of this in my analysis of *Three Kingdoms* in chapter 3. If Jelinek's meandering sentences were familiar, the short staccato sentences proved to be more difficult, since they were perceived as impeding the flow (notice the re-emergence of the category of fluidity) and as ungrammatical. The challenge for the actors was to sustain the development of

³¹ Original: Ich habe Ihnen hiermit mitzuteilen, daß sie ihre Hände willig darboten, daß sich ihr Wangenrot, von dem der nette schwarzgestiefelte Kollege vorhin sprach, nicht verfärbt hat, in Wahrheit haben wir gar kein Wangenrot gesehen, außer an der Frau Gräfin, Gräfin, wie gesagt, einzig und allein durch Heirat, die dafür sorgt, daß man nicht mehr der einzige und nicht mehr allein ist, und das alles in Ungarn, wo man aber nicht einmal leben wollte, wenn es Ungarn noch gäbe, ich meine, es gibt Ungarn in vielfältiger Gestalt und an vielen Orten, ja, auch in Österreich, aber dort möchte man nicht sein, lieber in der Schweiz. (Jelinek 2009: 92)

[Translation with original Punctuation]: I am herewith told to report that they gave their hands willingly, that their blushed cheeks, which the nice colleague in black boots has mentioned, did not change colour, actually we did not see blushed cheeks except for the countess – countess, as I mentioned, by marriage alone – she took care that you are not alone, and in all that Hungary, where you wouldn't want to live even if Hungary still existed, I mean Hungary exists in so many and at so many different places, yes, even in Austria, but you wouldn't want to be there, much better to be in Switzerland.]

New Punctuation: I am herewith told to report that they gave their hands willingly, that their blushed cheeks, which the nice colleague in black boots has mentioned, did not change colour. Actually we did not see blushed cheeks except for the countess – countess, as I mentioned, by marriage alone. She took care that you are not alone, and all that in Hungary, where you wouldn't want to live even if Hungary still existed. I mean Hungary exists in so many and at so many different places, yes, even in Austria. But you wouldn't want to be there, much better to be in Switzerland. (Jelinek 2011 a: 10)

a thought, the reverberation of a specific word or phrase, over several fragmented sentences. It becomes clear that signification cannot be imposed, neither by actor nor director nor translator, but has to emerge on its own. This insight was underlined by the results of the first rehearsal with O'Briain's group (06/12/10). Here, the actors had not read the text beforehand and therefore performed the very puzzlement and confusion they were feeling during the first read-through. This version, which openly acknowledged the text's fragmentation and asked the audience to find its own sense in the verbal web, was ultimately much more engaging than any attempt to explain the text.

These opportunities for the audience to construct their own meaning out of the materiality of language became particularly powerful in choric deliveries. Again, the aural qualities of language were not so much dictated by the text as elicited by the interaction of text and mode of performance, thus providing a strong case for the necessity of testing the sound and shape of a translation in the rehearsal room. In the third rehearsal with Chillingworth's group (12/12/10), the actors spoke the following section as a chorus:

Der zittert auch davor, was alles passieren könnte. Das hat er
inzwischen gelernt. Daß man ihn zu fürchten hat. Was alles durch ihn
passieren kann und was alles in ihn hineinpaßt. Das hat er gelernt.
(Jelinek 2009: 77)

[He's also shivering at the thought of what could happen. That he has
finally learnt. That you have to fear him. Everything that can happen
because of him and everything that fits into him. He has learnt that.]
(Jelinek 2011b: 7)

Even though the actors spoke simultaneously, each of them expressed a different attitude. Hamblyn called the result “harmonies of meaning”, which reminded me of the musicalisation of speech in Einar Schleef’s choric passages of *Ein Sportstück*, also by Jelinek.³² In a similar experiment with O’Brian’s group (14/12/10), Stickney adopted a flat, mechanical, and extremely fast delivery while Cusack spoke at the same time but with greater coloratura. The listening and interpretation happened in the space *between* these deliveries, and was shaped by the tension in their relationship. Meaning was created not by the individual voice, but through difference. What our practical work on the translated text underlined most forcefully was the need to develop exercises and approaches that allowed the actors to expand their ways of engaging with a text. This corresponds to Steeve Gooch’s observation that “one of the difficulties I observe in rehearsing these plays is that actors can sense when the method of playing them is different from what they’re used to” (Gooch 1996: 16).

Intersemiotic translation and metaphoric gesture

The necessity of expanding rehearsal methodologies when approaching theatrical realist texts in translation also pertains to the way verbal and non-verbal aspects of performance interact in these plays. The translator’s active participation in rehearsal therefore includes the function of cultural mediator. The actors’ direct involvement in a translation process that is gestural (spatial, temporal) as well as verbal engages them with the highly challenging nature of the language, the length and complexity of the sentences, in order to explore and push the actors’ vocal limits. Moreover, a practical enquiry will activate

³² David Roesner talks about the “tonally complex sum of the combination of different individual voices” (Roesner 2003: 188).

Pavis' intersemiotic translation for the translation process taken as a whole. Space, time, sound, and gesture will provide the translator with nonverbal codes in which linguistically problematic sections of the source text can be further elucidated. Furthermore, the translator can explore the metaphoric potential already present in Jelinek's language in a metaphoric relationship between words and gestures. Thereby, the incorporation of translation into the rehearsal process could combine the two middle stages of Pavis' intersemiotic translation process, stage 3, the "*mise en jeu* of the source text" in which the translator imagines a staging, and stage 4, the "*mise en jeu* of the target text" in which the language-bodies (word and gesture) are confronted. (Pavis 1989: 34). According to Ubersfeld, "it is possible to substitute a sign belonging to one code for a sign belonging to another" (cit. in: Upton 2011: 36). Translation in the rehearsal room could thus establish a process of mutual influence and flexible reshaping between verbal and nonverbal elements of the text to be translated. In this way, foreignising strategies in the one code can be juxtaposed with domesticating strategies in the other, thereby creating a subtle balance of bewilderment and recognition.

Using gestures metonymically to elucidate as well as metaphorically to create ambiguities, my intersemiotic translation makes use of the same play of difference between verbal and non-verbal that occurs in German-language productions of Jelinek's plays:

Diese Verdopplung des Gesprochenen auf der visuellen Ebene ist allerdings nicht Illustration. Vielmehr stehen die akustischen und visuellen Formen gleichrangig nebeneinander, ohne sich einem primären Sinn unterzuordnen.

[This duplication of the spoken word on the visual level, however, is not an illustration. Instead, acoustic and visual forms are ranked equally, and without being subjugated to a primary meaning.] (Johanning 2004: 72)

For Gershon Shaked, this is the enormous power of the theatre: it “possesses extra-textual resources permitting it to emphasize the similarity of what is different without forgoing the differentness” (Shaked 1989: 13). Since metaphor has been established as ‘similarity in difference’ (chapter 1), Shaked sees metaphorical expression as the main strength of theatre. As proposed earlier, the combination of interlingual and intersemiotic translation can help to solve notorious problems in the translation of puns and language games. The phrase “Das Fleisch muß weg. Der Mond hat seinen eigenen Hof. Dort kann er sein eigenes Vieh züchtigen” (Jelinek 2009: 59) with its puns on “Hof” (farm/halo) and on “züchtigen“, which is nearly homonymous with “züchten” (to breed) cannot be translated directly. However, a compensatory wordplay such as “The moon has its own cow to chastise, hey diddle diddle”, in all its linguistic obscurity, can still be performed by the actors as an ‘in-joke’. Thus, the expression would regain both its humour and its playfulness through the way the actors react to it. Even when the relationship between language and performance is not as explicatory as in this example, it can spark off associative significations. Moore performed the section starting “Sie sehen ja selbst, die sind jetzt toll geworden” (Jelinek 2009: 143) [You can see yourself, they have gone crazy] (Jelinek 2011a: 15) in a version where the gestures were purely mechanical; the director had asked her to adopt a series of movements typical of a politician (rehearsal O’Brian, 16/12/10). Her repetitive pointing down on the line “Fehlen nur noch Frauenchöre am Fuß der Berge” (Jelinek 2009: 143) [the

only thing missing is a female choir at the foot of the mountains] (Jelinek 2011a: 15) emptied out the metonymic power of the gesture; instead, it became a blank sign, a signifier without signified. However, as the text progressed, this emptying out of a familiar gesture transformed it into a metaphor and allowed the audience to fill it with new meaning; gestures and words entered into surprising and new relationships. One of the results was an emotional double-bind, where the words “Wir Boten sorgen dafür, daß es nachher nicht so geschehen sein wird!” (Jelinek 2009: 143) [We messengers will take care that it won't have happened like this!] (*Rechnitz, version O: 15*) provide a statement that her mechanical gesture implicitly denies. Without an external coherent reality as a reference point, it is left to the audience to read this one way or the other.

Translating into a second language

The recurrent and fruitful play of difference between foreignisation and domestication, different choric voices, and word and gesture was in my experience created by the collaboration of a translator working in his second language with directors and actors as native speakers. Nike Pokron reminds us that

the assumption that translators can master only their mother tongue and must therefore translate only in that direction, despite its seemingly eternal and ancient aura, developed rather late in the Western world.
(Pokron 2005: 25)

Pokron goes on to point out that this tendency was subsequently strengthened especially by “the first and second nationalist generation of Romantic authors”

(ibid: 25), and thus draws out the nationalist and hegemonic roots of the 'common sense' approach of translating only into one's mother language. The usual caveats against translating into a language other than your own are based on notions of fluidity and invisibility as outlined by Venuti: such translations are criticised as recognizably strange in choice of words and sentence structure; they do not imitate the 'natural' flow of the target language and lack a 'natural' rhythm. They are, as Pokron reminds us, also a striving for cultural dominance:

Native speakers of the languages that are regarded as major or core because of the global distribution of power and wealth tend to safeguard their authority and prestige, and therefore rarely grant the status of native speakership to those who were not born into a language but who learnt it later in life. (ibid: 1)

If, however, dramatic realism and naturalistic recreation of speech patterns are no longer the main aim of translation, working in one's second language can be reclaimed as an active tool of dissidence. Anderman underlines that

before naturalism reached the stage, the lack of knowledge about the spoken code of language was, however, not of crucial importance in the theatre, as the way ordinary people spoke was not considered to be appropriate language for use on stage. (Anderman 2005: 23)

Jelinek's playtexts are similarly unconcerned with "the way ordinary people [speak]". Translation into one's second language then becomes a strategy to activate the interplay between foreignisation and domestication. The foreignising effect of my translation necessitated the deconstruction and reassembly of the text, which in its turn allowed a deeper engagement with and

greater understanding of the text. The strangeness and awkwardness of my translation openly acknowledged its own foreignness and thus asked director and actors to become involved in the process of trying to understand it and make it understandable from a British audience's point of view. Jelinek herself acknowledges that this collaboration between native speakers of source and target language is the most promising (even though my being German makes me not as perfect a fit as she envisages): "Austrians co-operating with native-speakers of the respective language might be able to translate my texts" (cit. in: Görtzschacher 2004: 484). Moreover, the task of cultural mediator turned out to be crucial. The need to explain cultural and historical implications as widely as possible meant that the translator could take nothing for granted. Often, only the rigorous process of interrogating the text brought out the full extent of Jelinek's allusions and cross-references. Domestication then opened up the formal structure to playfulness and invention. The potential formal austerity of the German text was broken down and made accessible by rehearsal methodologies steeped in the more naturalistic British context. For example, O'Briain found one performance particularly effective in which he had asked the actors to play a clear 'super-objective': they all have to tell the story, but do not want to. Every time they started a sentence, he asked them to move forward, thereby embodying their inner conflict in the movement. The result was a performance where awkward pauses were followed by rapid delivery of text and the actors interrupted each other in their eagerness to get this over and done with. It metonymically encapsulated the situation of messengers who are "told to report" (Jelinek 2011a: 10), who are precariously situated on the brink between witness and perpetrator. O'Briain expressed his mistrust of this approach, thinking that it might be too easy, too obvious. However, remembering the

possibility of combining a psychological approach with a postdramatic one as we have seen with Jossi Wieler, I propose that this instance points to the kind of hybridity discussed by Johnston. The German theatrical realist form interacts with a British dramatic realisation and creates a performance that transforms all elements involved. In doing so, such a performance can contribute to the already existing sets of practices that challenge the hegemony of realism in Great Britain, for example, theatre by companies such as Forced Entertainment or Complicite.

It has become clear that the translation of theatrical realist texts can also profit from the heuristic identification and separation of different modes of representation in texts and performances as developed in chapter 1. An awareness of these different modes and of possible correspondences between them makes it possible to question existing norms in Anglo-American translation practice and to suggest alternative solutions. The new enlarged responsibility of the translator as a cultural mediator in a collaboration process is one of the most crucial conclusions in this chapter. If the translator engages not only with the text but with all aspects of performance, the stage's nonverbal elements allow him or her to create a new and complex balance between domesticating and foreignising elements across all codes, thereby accounting for the hybridity of the texts. Intersemiotic translation can become an especially powerful tool for the translator when working with a kind of theatre that sees the text as just one equal element amongst many. Moreover, those kinds of translations that have previously been discarded as faulty are re-activated in translation processes combining collaborators from both languages involved: what has previously been understood normatively as a mistake can now prompt a deeper

engagement with the foreign text and its historical, social, cultural and theatrical context and norms.

CHAPTER 3: Observation of rehearsal methodologies

Rehearsing hybrids, hybrid rehearsals

My two rehearsal observations are intended to serve as a bridge between my theoretical reflections on the role of narration and dialogue in German-language and British playtexts and their relationship to gesture, and my own practical exploration of these questions in the two directing projects of chapter 4. I deliberately chose one German and one British director to be able to compare and contrast their approaches. Moreover, my choice was also motivated by the stylistic features of the text these directors were working with. I was looking for strong narrative elements within the form of these plays, ideally in a continuation of my investigation of the specific playwrights discussed earlier. Eventually, I decided to follow rehearsals for Sebastian Nübling's German production of Simon Stephens' *Three Kingdoms* and Ramin Gray's British production of Sarah Kane's *Crave*. The playtexts for both productions were written by British writers. This was partly the result of practical circumstances. After my observations of *Three Kingdoms*, I was not able to find a British production of a German-language play that took place within my timeframe and to which I could gain access. Unfortunately, Gray and the ATC had just finished their rehearsals of Schimmelpfennig's *The Golden Dragon* (although I was able to observe one pick-up rehearsal in London during the tour of the play). However, I decided that the nationality of the playwrights was of lesser importance than the presence of narrative and dialogic elements in their plays, since the focus of this chapter is directorial practices. Also, it emerged in chapter 1 that the *hybridity* of formal textual features is shared by British and German-language playtexts. Consequently, even a consideration of only British

plays – if chosen with an eye towards the presence of narration – is likely to yield important insights into the range of rehearsal methodologies with which the directors engage with this textual hybridity.

I have already discussed Stephens and his formal position vis-à-vis German-language plays in chapter 1. The initial script of *Three Kingdoms* that was the point of departure for Nübling's rehearsals is overall more dialogic than, for example, Stephens' *Pornography*. It is centred on a detective story in which the two main characters, Ignatius Stone and Charlie Lee, investigate the death of a prostitute in London, Germany, and Estonia. When asked to characterise Stephens' writing in comparison to contemporary German-language plays, dramaturg Julia Lochte stated that he "schreibt immer über Dialog und hat fast schon eine Aversion dass man Texte auf der Bühne übers Monologische als Textfläche in Prinzip rein schmuggelt ins Stück. Er entwickelt eigentlich jede Situation aus dem Dialog" [always writes dialogue and almost has an aversion to smuggling texts onto the stage via the monologue as planes of language; he develops more or less every situation out of dialogue] (Lochte cit. in: Peters 2011b). Having seen Nübling's previous work on *Pornography* and its focus on narration and audience address, I was interested to find out how he would approach the "Hyperrealismus" [hyperrealism] of the dialogue in *Three Kingdoms* (Myhr cit. in: Peters 2011c). For Myhr, this hyperrealism is not a "Realismus verortet im Alltag" [a realism situation in the everyday] (ibid), but an artificially heightened and condensed model of reality. It uses "Banalitäten des Textes" [banalities of the text] such as repetitions of seemingly unimportant phrases, Stone's and Lee's avoidance of the questions pertinent to the case at the beginning of the investigation (cp. Stephens 2011b: 4-9) and the conscious and heightened use of clichés (for example national stereotypes) to create the

impression of an unstable and threatening world. Stephens consciously used the greater conventionality of the crime story as a “paradigm that he [Nübling] would find frustrating, in order to liberate him” (Stephens cit. in: Peters 2011h). Moreover, the crime thriller is “ein Genre das im Theater bisher nicht zu Hause war” [a genre that has not really been at home in the theatre so far] (Lochte cit. in: Peters 2011b).

Sarah Kane’s *Crave*, on the other hand, presented a good starting point for my investigation of directorial approaches to text because of its fragmented, largely non-dialogic nature. According to Alan Williams, who played A in the first production of *Crave*, directed by Vicky Featherstone (Traverse Theatre 1998), Kane originally wanted the text without speech headers that clearly allocate it to four characters, instead proposing that the actors should freely distribute the text between them (Williams cit. in: Peters 2012a). Together with *4.48 Psychosis*, *Crave* is furthest removed from Kane’s otherwise “continuing faith in the efficacy of theatre’s ability to ‘shock’ its audience through a skilful representation of the ‘real’” (Tomlin 2004: 506).

It has to be emphasised that neither of the two productions is representative of ‘the’ German or British styles of directing. In fact, I will conclude my rehearsal observations with a reflection on the validity of associating specific directorial approaches with specific national theatrical traditions. Nonetheless, both Nübling and Gray have built up a reputation in their respective countries and abroad. Consequently, like the playwrights I am focusing on, these directors can be taken as indicative of certain trends or what Peter Brook calls “model social patterns” in rehearsals with regard to actors (cit. in the original English in: Tiedje 2005: 85). In contrast to many other German

directors, especially operating in the municipal theatres, Nübling's background is in cultural studies (Kulturwissenschaften) in Hildesheim instead of a directing degree from one of the German-language drama schools. His approach to playtexts is certainly influenced by this education in which "man sich so zwischen den Künsten bewegt" [you move between the arts] and including "bildende Kunst, Musik, Filmeinflüsse" [visual arts, music, influences from film] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d). Gray also came to directing indirectly and in a way that he calls "very English in the sense that there was no formal training, just doing it, watching people doing it, and then figuring out how they did it and then copying it" (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c). Unlike Nübling's extremely multi-layered mise-en-scène where the text is one among many elements, Gray sees himself as a "ventriloquist" who "presents the writer's voice" (ibid). Both directors have worked in Great Britain and Germany, with *Three Kingdoms* being Nübling's first work in Great Britain. Gray has staged German playwrights in Great Britain, and has also worked on Stephens' texts in Germany and Austria (for example *On the Shore of the Wide World*, Volksbühne Vienna 2007 and *Harper Regan*, Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg 2008). As a British director, Gray is an interesting counterpoint to Nübling because of his work abroad. What resulted from this was his realisation that "I was a bit disappointed with myself that when it came to it, I became so much more English than I ever thought I would be. [...] I shy away from the grand gesture." (ibid). There is a strong intercultural aspect in both directors' work that makes them especially interesting for my investigation. Of course, *Three Kingdoms* as a deliberate experiment in a co-production between three countries (Germany, UK, Estonia) illustrates some of the opportunities and challenges of intercultural work most directly.

Germany and Great Britain: directors' theatre VS writers' theatre?

Before investigating the rehearsals and directorial choices for *Three Kingdoms* and *Crave* in detail, I would like to provide a brief account of the larger national context for Nübling as a German-language director and Gray as a British one. Are there tendencies that can be identified in German and British directing practices, for all their diversity? And is the common distinction between Germany as a directors' theatre and Great Britain as a writers' theatre accurate or indeed helpful? This consideration of tendencies in directing approaches goes hand in hand with my analysis of trends in contemporary German-language and British playwriting as analysed in chapter 1, and will accordingly be constructed around similar questions of representation of interiority and creation of worlds through narration and dialogue and metaphorical or metonymic gestures. In such a discussion, it is important to remember "that any identity is created within a structure of difference in which identity is never settled, never stable, and remains constituted by what it seems to exclude" (Delgado and Rebellato 2010: 5). There is not 'the' German or British director, only socio-historical and cultural emphases on certain aspects of their practice. Rita Gerlach-March summarises Egon Tiedje's comparative analysis of British and German theatre cultures, using productions of plays by Alan Ayckbourn as his example. Gerlach-March shows that Tiedje's results fall in the following British vs. German binaries: "implizit vs. explizit (Darstellung und Konzepte); Ironie und Distanz vs. Authentizität und Ausdruck; Kontinuität und Kohärenz vs. Diskontinuität; Timing vs. überlange (bedeutungsschwangere) Pausen" [implicit vs. explicit (performance and concept); irony and distance vs. authenticity and

expressiveness; continuity and coherence vs. discontinuity; timing vs. overlong pauses heavy with meaning] (Gerlach-March 2011: 259). Tiedje's juxtaposition is problematic on several levels: It is surprising that he aligns German theatre with "authenticity" and not with "distance". As we will see, Nübling's practice displays a complex interplay of authenticity *and* distance, and my subsequent account of three other German directors will confirm this as one important trend. Moreover, there is an internal contradiction between the categories: while "irony and distance" ascribed to British theatre sounds more Brechtian, and the "authenticity and expressiveness" ascribed to German theatre more Stanislavskian, the next set of binaries, "continuity and coherence vs. discontinuity", seems to invert this. Consequently, Tiedje's attempt to juxtapose British and German theatre traditions demonstrates the danger of such generalisations. All of the aspects mentioned by Tiedje relate at least to some extent to the acting styles at the disposal of the director. However, there *are* examples of explicit, expressive, discontinuous performance in Great Britain, for example in the work of companies like Forced Entertainment or GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN. Forced Entertainment is a particularly interesting hybrid case, since according to Alex Mermikides it "has brought together two seemingly incompatible notions of creative authorship, pairing a commitment to non-hierarchical group creation with the precision and rigour that comes from the clarity and uniqueness of an individual vision" (Mermikides 2010: 119). The genesis of Etchell's texts might be less clearly attributed to his "individual vision" since they arise from specific situations created by the group and feed back into another set of group situations. Nonetheless, this negotiation between texts written (or at least chosen and collated) by a single author and their performative treatment by a group offers a model of hybridity that displays

certain parallels to Nübling's work with new writing. In contrast to German theatre however, these modes of performance are still perceived as opposed to new writing. Overall there is next to no 'devising with new playtexts', and the rare exceptions to the rule (for example Just a Must's production of Jelinek's *Sports Play*) are often direct responses to European playtexts and consciously inspired by European modes of performance. As a result, the British director of new writing often has access to a smaller range of styles than the German one. While Giannachi and Luckhurst argue that "the cult of the director dominates theatre practice" in Britain as much as in Europe (Giannachi and Luckhurst 1999: xiii), Aleks Sierz points out that "most plays are presented in a naturalistic and social-realist style which tends to flatten out the differences between individual directors" (Sierz 2010: 145). The task of the director is focused on the work with the actors and mostly not concerned with an overarching concept for the play.

The reasons for the different perception of the role of the director in Great Britain and in Germany are partly historical:

To a greater extent than elsewhere, already in the early nineteenth century the German stage was a 'director's theatre'. The figure of the director emerged [...] a good century earlier than in either England or America. The effect was to make the German stage more open to aesthetic theory and to the development of new dramatic forms. (Innes 2008: 171)

Innes explicitly links the director with a diversity of styles. "Aesthetic theory", for example by Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Brecht, Schechner, or Hans-Thies Lehmann, has certainly had an impact on the development of different approaches to acting. It is also crucial that these developments in directing have

always been in a dialectic relationship with new forms of playwriting, as I have argued in chapter 1. Moreover, the visual aspect of theatre – a crucial space for the realisation of a directorial concept – has been an important element in German theatre for longer than in British theatre. Roberta Levitow elucidates this etymologically, contrasting “the English word ‘audience’” with its emphasis on the textual, spoken dimension of theatre with “the word used in nearly every European country, ‘spectator’” with its emphasis on the visual, gestural, embodied dimension (Levitow 2002: 35f). Another historical step is the emergence of the ‘Regietheater’. The term ‘directors’ theatre’ that is still used in many contemporary discussions of German theatre is a translation, though one that incorrectly “reiff[ies] the notion of individual ownership, transferring it from the playwright to the director” (Boenisch 2008: 32). It is therefore important to remember that

the term, in a strict sense, refers to a very specific cultural product of the 1960s’ Federal Republic, when directors such as Claus Peymann, Hans Neuenfels, Peter Stein and Peter Zadek rebelled against prevailing directorial practices affirming eternal values of German art and culture unblemished by the very recent past, as well as against a remoteness from the boiling topical affairs of the time. (ibid: 32)

While today’s directorial practices are certainly influenced by this ‘Regietheater’, continuing to use the term to define them betrays a misconception of their aesthetic genesis and agenda. The ‘Regietheater’ was an important step in the emergence of the director as an independent artist no longer constrained by the supposed ‘intentions’ of the text which already started in the historical avant-garde:

solange der Kunstcharakter der Theateraufführung allein durch den Kunstcharakter des Dramas als eines Werkes der Literatur gegeben und garantiert schien, galt das Inszenesetzen [sic] nicht als eine genuin künstlerische Tätigkeit.

[as long as the artistic nature of the theatrical performance was a given and guaranteed by it being a work of literature, the mise-en-scène was not regarded as a genuine artistic activity.] (Fischer-Lichte 2005: 147)

At the same time, this new artistic independence of the director in the Germany of the 60s is often connected to a simultaneous dearth in new writing:

The role of the director was hypostatized, and the play itself became a flexible material for radical reinterpretation. The target for such productions was the classic text, and while this tendency did not do away with new writing per se, it nonetheless had an inhibiting effect on it. (Barnett 2008a: 315)

We can perceive the opposite development in Britain where “at the moment [the 1950s] when British theatre rediscovered its talent for playwriting, it did so by, among other things, firmly placing the director at the service of the playwright and driving out the European influence on the theatre” (Rebellato 2010: 318f). This juxtaposition supports the idea that the opposition between British writers’ theatre and German directors’ theatre is a historical one, and has to be rethought with regards to contemporary theatre in both countries.

The key difference in contemporary British and German theatre lies not so much in the status of the director as in the range of aesthetics at his or her disposal. The broad spectrum of aesthetics in the German-speaking countries has been at least partly made possible by their funding structure: “der ‚typisch deutsche‘ Regietheaterboom [wurde] auch in nicht unbeträchtlichem Maße

durch staatliche Finanzierung ermöglicht” [the ,typically German’ boom of the director’s theatre has been made possible to no small extent by state subsidies] (Gerlach-March 2011: 295). In Britain, in contrast, “[c]ontinued industry indifference towards revivals of plays that ‘have done their job’ leaves little opportunity for plays presented in one region to be re-imagined in another” (Bolton 2012a: 222). This leaves little scope for directorial experimentation.

Marion Tiedke sees aesthetic diversity as the common ground between otherwise quite diverse directors German directors such as René Pollesch, Nicolas Stemann, Laurent Chétouane, Armin Petras, Luk Perceval and Andreas Kriegenburg. All of them have something in common: “die herkömmlichen Bedingungen des Spiels zu hinterfragen und aus dem kritischen Umgang mit dem Medium Theater neue Spielweisen zu gewinnen” [to question the conventional conditions of performance and gain new forms of performance through the critical treatment of the medium of theatre] (Tiedke 2009: 94). This investigation of “new forms of performance” also extends to their work with new texts: Pollesch and Petras have repeatedly staged their own texts, while Stemann has worked on various playtexts by Jelinek and Kriegenburg often cooperates with Loher. However, unlike ‘Regietheater’, many of them are looking for “a new way of claiming ownership of the heritage of the German dramatic canon that was no longer driven by the ironic and demystifying attitude of playful sabotage and demontage” yet without reverting to a “restorative conservatism” (Boenisch 2008: 31f). I will consider this unifying element of diversity using the examples of Jürgen Gosch (1943-2009), Jossi Wieler (*1951) and Andreas Kriegenburg (*1963), since all of them are highly successful directors who have worked repeatedly with contemporary playwrights. In contrast to Nübling with his diverse background in several non-theatrical arts,

who only left the so-called 'free scene'³³ in his forties, these three directors had their first professional theatre experiences within the system of the municipal theatres. Gosch started as a trained actor in the GDR, Kriegenburg worked as an assistant director after his training as a carpenter. And even though Jossi Wieler studied directing at the University in Tel Aviv, he started working as an assistant director in Germany immediately afterwards. I have already referred to the work of all three directors in previous chapters. We have encountered Gosch's work with Schimmelpfennig through his *mise-en-scène* of *Vorher/Nachher*, Kriegenburg's work with Loher in *Das letzte Feuer*, and Wieler's work with Jelinek in *Rechnitz*. This allows me to return to some of my examples and consider them from a directorial perspective. I will also show how dichotomies such as directors' theatre vs. writers' theatre, new writing vs. new work, or the aesthetic dichotomies identified by Tiedje, start to break down once we turn away from the finished product and consider the rehearsal methodologies of these directors, parallel to my detailed account and analysis of Nübling's methodologies.

Directors Gosch, Wieler and Kriegenburg consciously stage a multiplicity of worlds in order to negotiate the fragmentation of the self in today's society. Bernd Stegemann identifies this as one of the most important impacts of the historical 'Regietheater': "Das Drama und seine Kollision schien nicht mehr ausreichend für die Darstellung der modernen Welt. An seine Stelle setzte der Regisseur die Kollision der theatralischen Mittel" [The drama and its confrontation seemed no longer sufficient for the representation of the modern world. The director replaced it with confrontations of the means of the theatre]

³³ The German 'free scene' are independent theatre groups outside the municipal theatre system. They often receive project funding instead of more permanent subsidies. Historically, there used to be a strong opposition, also aesthetically, between the free and the established municipal theatre scene. However, this divide has begun to break down, with free groups like Rimini Protokoll or andcompany&Co regularly collaborating with municipal theatres.

(Stegemann 2008: 109). Confrontation is moved from the level of individual agency to the level of form. This relates back to my discussion of theatrical realism as the dominant form in German-language theatre, and demonstrates how deeply intertwined writing and directing approaches are. Stegemann also continues to relate this to the way the directors (and writers) emphasise the aspect of potentiality over that of actuality in their representation of reality:

Insofern Realismus heute der Versuch ist, dem Spiel der Latenzen der Realität auf Augenhöhe zu begegnen, wird ein Ausdruck gesucht, der diese Latenzen in einer ästhetischen Kollision unter Zugzwang setzt.

[In so far as realism today is the attempt to meet the blindspots of reality at eye level, it seeks an expression that puts these blindspots in an aesthetic confrontation that forces them to emerge.] (ibid: 110)

The type of realism posited in theatrical realism acknowledges reality as an interplay of possibilities and seeks to gain theatricality through the aesthetic confrontation of these different possibilities. The German-language directors create worlds of contingencies. As we will see in Nübling's use of improvisation, they release these contingencies through "ein System [...] in dem Dinge geschehen, jenseits der Intention eines individuellen schöpferischen Subjekts" [a system [...] where things happen that lie beyond the intention of an individual creative subject] (Matzke 2012: 227). In the world premiere of Schimmelpfennig's *Vorher/Nachher* (Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg, 2003), Jürgen Gosch put these systems of contingencies squarely on stage. He explored the difference between actor and figure in moments that let us glimpse something ambiguous, possibly private, and therefore full of potentiality of

meaning. These moments were often created through a metaphoric use of gestures, such as the contrapuntal twisting away from the man's touch while she states that "she's very close to cheating on her boyfriend" (Schimmelpfennig 2004a: 404). In his rehearsals, this playful, non-psychological approach to figures manifested itself in an incredible openness: "Gosch will den Schauspielern keinerlei Vorgaben für die Figuren machen. Alles soll aus dem Spiel entstehen" [Gosch does not want to prescribe anything to the actors with regard to their figures. Everything should arise out of the acting] (Eberth 2009: 109). His theatre has been characterised as "das Schweben des reinen Spiels" [free-floating pure play] (Kümmel 2009a). Gosch shared Nübling's interest in the private, the apparently irrelevant, and underlined that "[m]an muss die Geduld haben, das auszuhalten – die peinlichen Vorschläge, die nichtssagenden. Und man muss sicher sein, dass andere kommen werden." [You have to have the patience to endure that – the embarrassing or bland suggestions. And you have to be sure that other suggestions will come] (Gosch cit. in: Kümmel 2009b). Actor Ulrich Matthes echoed the mixed feeling of pressure and excitement of many of the actors that we will encounter in my account of Nübling's *Three Kingdoms* when he stated that such rehearsals have an "ein letztendlich rätselhaftes und beglückendes Klima: der unausgesprochene Appell zur Eigenverantwortung" [enigmatic and exhilarating atmosphere: the unspoken appeal to personal responsibility] (cit. in: *ibid*). In contrast to Nübling however, Gosch worked extremely closely with the text, and was once known for his "strengen, sperrigen, damals fast asketisch auf die Textarbeit konzentrierten Arbeiten" [strict, unwieldy works that were focused in an almost ascetic way on the text] (Dössel 2009). Nonetheless, the text remained "ein eigenständiger Körper" [an independent body] (*ibid*) for him, and was not the sole key to the

interiority of the figures. Instead, he emphasised a state of ambiguity that did not build on “die ewige Gewissheit des Textes” [the eternal knowability of the text] (Gosch cit. in: Eberth 2009: 106). Gosch has staged ten plays by Schimmelpfennig with their recurrent feature of intertwining narratives overtaking direct dialogue. His engagement with the text was marked by an eye for the visual, gestural, and performative potentialities offered by the text, or, as Schimmelpfennig himself put it in his laudatory speech on Gosch in honour of the director being awarded the Berliner Theaterpreis 2009: “alles ist spielbar, solange es im Text vorkommt” [everything can be acted, as long as it is in the text] (cit. in: Schaper 2009). Gosch brought out the magical in Schimmelpfennig’s plays, such as the transformation into animals in *Das Reich der Tiere* [*The animal kingdom*] (Deutsches Theater 2007), by bringing the transformative potential of the actor to the forefront of his productions. The actors are constantly on stage in many of his productions, so nothing is hidden: the audience sees them taking on new characters, slipping in and out of new costumes. Theatricality was at the heart of Gosch’s work.

Andreas Kriegenburg shares Gosch’s detailed work on and with the text, especially in his work on new writing, most significantly through his long-standing co-operation with Dea Loher on eighteen plays spanning her entire career (including the most recent staging of *Am schwarzen See* [*At the black lake*] at the Deutsches Theater, October 2012). Berger claims it to be “die eigentümlichste, langlebigste und produktivste Autoren-Regisseur-Verbindung des deutschen Gegenwartstheaters” [the most unusual, long-lasting and productive author-director partnership in contemporary German theatre] (Berger

2003: 65).³⁴ This productive and flexible relationship provides a parallel to the mutual trust Nübling and Stephens created through their work together. The attitude of the two directors vis-à-vis the playtexts is marked by similarities as well as by subtle but significant differences. Unlike Nübling's rigorous cutting, reshaping and rewriting, Kriegenburg "greift nicht in die Struktur des Textes ein, er bleibt dicht bei der Geschichte, kommentiert sie nicht von außen" [does not interfere with the structure of the text, stays close to the story, does not comment on it from outside] (Börgerding 2007: 335) – in a noticeable contrast to his much freer treatment of classical texts. This is at least partly also a reaction to Loher's rejection of a directorial deconstruction of her texts. Because of these differences, what Nübling and Kriegenburg's textual work has in common can serve to highlight larger tendencies in German directing. Both freely explore the relationship between text and gesture, and consciously experiment with and juxtapose different performative attitudes. Loher herself describes how

Kriegenburg macht zwar nicht im herkömmlichen Sinne texttreue und quasi-naturalistische Inszenierungen, aber er hat ein ungeheuer waches, genaues, und einfühlsames Gespür für die Atmosphäre eines Stückes [...].

[Kriegenburg does not create quasi naturalistic mise-en-scènes faithful to the text in the usual sense, but he has an incredibly alert, precise and sensitive intuition for a play's feel [...].] (cit. in: Berger 2003: 65)

In his staging of *Das letzte Feuer*, Kriegenburg's actors perform their figures with a distance characteristic of Brecht's Street Scene, from the vantage point of the afterlife, as we learn at the end of the play. In an interview on his work on *Adam Geist* [*Adam Ghost*], he describes how in rehearsals

³⁴ Kriegenburg has also staged *Protection* and *Radio Rhapsodie* by Anja Hilling, one of the other playwrights I am discussing.

Wir machen den Versuch, die Behauptung aufzustellen, daß Adam versucht, sich zusammen zu montieren. Er macht Imitationsversuche. [...] Er ist ein Sammler von Gesten, Tonfällen [...].

We attempt to claim that Adam tries to create himself through the montage of disparate parts. He attempts to imitate. [...] He is a collector of gestures, inflections [...] (cit. in: Koepp 1998: 176).

In Kriegenburg's productions, there exists "tief verwurzelte[s] Misstrauen, sich im gesprochenen Wort eindeutig und unmissverständlich mitteilen zu können" [a deeply rooted mistrust of the ability to express yourself clearly and unambiguously through the spoken word] and a corresponding "Aufwertung von tänzerischen, choreographischen, körpertheatralen Mitteln" [emphasis on dance, choreography, and physical theatre] (Berger 2003: 63). In this, he resembles Loher who also "lehnt [...] eine psychologische Ausdrucksweise [...] ab" "rejects psychological expression" (Haas 2006: 66), again an attitude that can be identified in the work of many German directors. I have already discussed in chapter 1 how Kriegenburg used a revolving stage in *Das letzte Feuer* to juxtapose text and gesture. Karoline's revelation about Ludwig's sexual fetish, given at the front of the stage, infuses the seemingly natural gestures that we could see in one of the rotating rooms behind her with a deeper meaning. The normality of Ludwig's interaction with his wife Susanne now allows hints at their darker recesses of other gestures and other desires. Kriegenburg, like Nübling and Gosch, is fascinated by the "Freiheit [...], die Dinge, die man braucht, [...] zu schaffen" [freedom to create the things you need] in theatre, the freedom "sich die Regeln für jede einzelne Inszenierung neue [zu] schaffen [to create the rules anew for each mise-en-scène]

(Kriegenburg cit. in: Berger 2003: 64). The rules and structures of the revolving stage in *Das letzte Feuer* is one example. It also highlights again the importance of the stage design for the director's development of new forms of performance in improvisations that I will discuss with regards to some of the problems in Nübling's production of *Three Kingdoms*. In spite of their free exploration of gestures and modes of performance, none of these directors can be accused of a total disregard of the text. Berger characterises Kriegenburg's directing as "[eine] Art, den Extrakt eines Stückes herauszufiltern" [a way to sift out the essence of a play] (ibid: 66). Peter Boenisch identifies a similar desire in Michael Thalheimer's work to see

this 'essence' not as a stable core, but as an animated process, as an experiential nucleus that generates, in the first instance, sensations, perceptions, and images which fashion a visceral and vital impact, rather than (re)produce the order of meaning. (Boenisch 2008: 33f)

For Boenisch, this free treatment of a text rooted in close reading is a distinctive trait of a post-'Regietheater' generation of German directors interested in a "neo-dramatic theatre" free of a "devalorization by a playful postmodern pop approach" (ibid: 32) whilst also avoiding older "conservative ideologies – including the ideology of the 'sacred' dramatic text" (ibid: 33). As with Gosch and Nübling, Kriegenburg's freedom vis-à-vis the text is manifest in his rehearsal methodologies. He says that in rehearsals "schaffen [wir] einen Raum, wo wir miteinander so tun, als wären wir verletzlich, weil wir verletzlich sind" [we create a room where we pretend together to be vulnerable, because we are vulnerable] (Berger 2003: 65). The result is "Spielen [...]. Mit den Gegenständen, mit den Schauspielern, mit dem Text." [Playing [...]. With objects, with the actors, with the text] (ibid: 66). The freedom to discover,

explore, and arrange different ways of representing worlds on stage in rehearsals is a common feature of German directors.

This constant questioning and reinvention of theatrical form is also visible in the work of Jossi Wieler, otherwise perhaps the most 'psychological' of these directors. This might be most obvious in his work on Elfriede Jelinek's texts, whose non-dialogic form refuses a Stanislavskian understanding of character as a complete whole. For Jelinek, "die Figuren sind ja nicht ‚sie selbst‘, [...] sondern Produkte von Ideologie" [the figures are not 'themselves', [...] but products of ideology] (cit. in: Kurzenberger 2011b: 129-130). This means that they are, both in the text and in Wieler's staging, "Produkte eines vielfach disparate kollektiven Herstellungsprozesses [...] wenn die Schauspieler auf die ihnen je eigene Weise sich mit dem Text verbinden, [...] mit einem argumentativen Gestus oder einem emotionalen Zustand" [products of an often disparate collective process of creation [...] when the actors bond with the text in their own ways, [...] with an argumentative gestus or an emotional relationship] (ibid: 130). Wieler's engagement with Jelinek's figures therefore reveals his careful experimentation with performative forms – always, as with Kriegenburg, linked to a close reading of the text. This fusion of different methodologies can be traced back to his training and early career, where he was influenced by the "in Israel besonders lebendige, weil von russischen Einwanderern in den zwanziger Jahren importierte und vertretene Stanislavski-Tradition" [the Stanislavsky tradition, which is especially vibrant in Israel because it was imported by Russian immigrants in the twenties] (Kurzenberger 2011a: 14) as well as by a "Körpertheater, das mit den Namen Jerzy Grotowski oder Peter Brook verbunden wird" [theatre of the body, connected with the names of Jerzy Grotowski or Peter Brook] (ibid: 14). Interiority is crucial in Wieler's theatre, but

“[es muß] immer zuerst der Körper sprechen [...] und nicht eine vom Dramatiker verbalisierte Innenwelt” [the body always has to speak first and not an inner world verbalized by the dramatist] (ibid: 15). As we have seen in Kriegenburg and Gosch, language is an important but independent element of Wieler’s mise-en-scène, where “körperlicher Ausdruck seine Signifikanz in Analogie und im Widerspruch zum gestischen Detail [entwickelt]” [bodily expression develops its significance analogous and in contradiction to gestural detail] (ibid: 15). In this context, Wieler introduces elements of psychological performance as a conscious questioning of and resistance to the text. One of his suggestions during the rehearsals for Jelinek’s *Ulrike Maria Stuart* (Münchner Kammerspiele 2007) was “Psychologie zu erfinden, wo es keine gibt” [to invent psychology where there is none] (Wieler cit. in: Kurzenberger 2011b: 130), as I have already mentioned in chapter 2. Wieler’s investigation of different theatrical forms is rooted in rehearsals as an open process, similar to Nübling: “die fehlende Fixierung förder[t] Aufmerksamkeit und Wachheit, [verhilft] dazu, die zwischenmenschliche Realität jeweils neu zu sehen und neu zu schaffen” [not tying things down encourages attention and alertness, and helps to see and create the interpersonal relationships anew each time] (ibid: 134). In contrast to Nübling, however (but closer to Gosch’s work), this open exploration largely happens in discussions and less in improvisations: twenty-one days before the premiere, Kurzenberger as an observer of the rehearsals was surprised that, “der Probenstag sich in einem Verhältnis von drei Viertel Gespräch und einem Viertel Spiel aufteilt” [the rehearsal day is divided into three parts conversation and one part acting] (ibid: 128). The improvisation only occurs after these discussions, since, according to the actress Hildegard Schmahl with whom Wieler has worked several times, “[v]iel zu wissen über das Stück’ sei die

Voraussetzung, szenisch improvisieren [...] zu können” [‘knowing a lot about the play’ is the prerequisite for [...] scenic improvisations] (ibid: 136). While this is not diametrically opposed to Nübling’s methodology, it is much closer to the British approach to improvisation as we will encounter for example in my observations of the rehearsals for *Crave*. All of the German directors discussed so far, however, have in common what Kurzenberger ascribes to Wieler’s staging of Jelinek’s *Wolken.Heim*. (Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg, 1993): “Zwischenräume, Assoziationen und Subtexte, die ein Eigenleben und Eigenrecht dieser Frauen als Kehrseite der affirmierten Männertexte erkennen lassen“ [interstices, associations, and subtexts that allow us to recognise that these women [i.e. the *characters*] have their own life and their own right as the other side of the flipside of the affirmed male texts] (Kurzenberger 2011c: 82). It is this interest in the different, the strange, in foreign and disparate elements, a multiplicity of worlds even in the notion of character, that can be identified as a unifying tendency in German directing. The relationship between German directors and playwrights is mostly one where “weder der Autor Angst davor hat, sein Stück zertrümmert zu sehen, noch der Regisseur fürchtet, mit einem Bannfluch belegt zu werden, wenn er in der Regiearbeit das Stück verändert” [the author is not afraid that his play will be smashed, nor the director that he will be ostracised if he changes the play in his directing work] (Khuon cit. in: Gutjahr 2008: 63). There are important exceptions to such an unproblematic relationship between author and director, including Loher herself. Playwright Martin Heckmanns summarises his critique of the author’s position in German theatre in the following words: “Immer: zu wenig wichtig” [Always never important enough] (cit. in: Haas 2009b: 93). Theresia Walser demands that “ein

Stück erst zuerst einmal wie eine Partitur gelesen wird” [that a play is first of all read like a musical score] (Walser 2009: 136) and complains:

Es kommt mir seit einiger Zeit so vor, als gäbe es in dem Verhältnis zwischen Autor und Regisseur, auf Seiten des Regisseurs, eine unausgesprochene Rivalität, als ginge es darum, wer von beiden den Abend gewinnt. So als fürchte der Regisseur nichts mehr, als daß er hinter dem Text des Autors verschwinden könnte.

[For some time, it has seemed to me that there is an unspoken rivalry in the relationship between author and director on the side of the director, as if it were about the question who of them would win the evening. As if the director were afraid of nothing greater than disappearing behind the author's text.] (cit. in: *ibid*: 134-135)

Consequently, the influence of directorial interpretation and perhaps even appropriation is by no means uncontested in the German-speaking theatre. At the same time, we will see in the following account of Nübling's rehearsals for Stephens' *Thee Kingdoms* how the more open relationship between author and director, which is more common, especially in the younger generation, has even influenced some British writers like Simon Stephens.

Nonetheless, the British directors of new writing in contrast are generally more invested in the detailed construction of the whole model of reality characteristic of dramatic realism. As discussed in chapter one, such a model can include instances where the conventions of dramatic realism are called into question, if the *overall* wholeness of the model (and thus its self-concealing tendencies) remains intact. They accept the world as sketched by the play as authoritative, and focus on psychological exploration of the characters with the actors in this framework. The exploration of the conflict within the drama takes

precedence before an exploration of conflicting forms of representation. I will draw on Katie Mitchell (*1964), Sean Holmes (*1969), and Max Stafford-Clark (*1941) as examples to sketch this tendency in British directing in comparison to Gray's practice as discussed above. All three are highly regarded directors of new writing, with Stafford-Clark standing out due to his work as Artistic Director of the Royal Court (1979-1993) and of new writing companies Joint Stock (1974-1989) and Out of Joint (founded 1993). In addition, both Holmes and Mitchell have directed work by Stephens (Holmes: *Pornography*, Birmingham Repertory Theatre and Traverse Theatre 2009, *A Thousand Stars Explode in the Sky* by Simon Stephens, David Eldridge and Robert Holman, Lyric Hammersmith 2010, *Morning* Traverse Theatre 2012; Mitchell: *Wastwater*, Royal Court 2011, *The Trial of Ubu*, Hampstead Theatre 2012).

Katie Mitchell is (in)famous as a 'European' director in Great Britain – “the ultimate auteur in a continental European tradition” (Billington 2007: 405). Starting with her production of *Waves* (National Theatre 2007), an adaptation of Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves*, she has repeatedly returned to bold multimedia performances that explore the constructedness of performative images. Nonetheless, her work remains strongly based on a reinvestigation of Stanislavsky's techniques for creating characters that are whole. In this, she demonstrates a belief that aligns her with many other British directors, namely that “there are certain basic skills that have to be put into practice in any production, whatever the vision, voice or interpretation of the director” and that with regard to these skills “the main emphasis is on work with actors” (Mitchell 2009: 1). The very fact that she decided to publish a book on *The Director's Craft* demonstrates her acceptance of certain basic frameworks for directing shared across all forms that can be set down. It is noticeable that books on

directing are a more common feature in Great Britain than they are in Germany. Some examples include Michael McCaffery's *Directing a Play* (Phaidon 1988) and Rob Swain's *Directing – A Handbook for Emerging Theatre Directors* (Methuen 2011), while there is no manual in Germany that I am aware of which details precise steps or exercises (with Brecht's 'Model Books' as a possible exception). This is also related to a difference in the training of directors, with the existence of directing manuals reflecting the absence of directing courses comparable to the German model (even though there are a number of one or two year Masters degrees). In her book on directing, Mitchell investigates in detail how to build "an imaginary world for the actors to inhabit, using ingredients from real life and circumstances suggested by the text itself" (Mitchell 2009: 2). Mitchell insists that "you can apply the tasks" of developing character "to any genre of play. Even if a character is playing Big Foot in a play by Picasso, he needs to know whose foot he belonged to, how he became detached and what he wants at each stage of the action" (ibid: 51). This essentially dramatic realist approach to acting differs markedly from the exploration of different performative styles encountered in the German directors.

As already mentioned, Mitchell explicitly bases her exploration of character on Stanislavsky. Like Gray, she has found Stanislavsky's "later work on physical actions of more use in my own work than his earlier work on emotional memory" (ibid: 227). They also share an interest in "any details from the writer's life that talk specifically to the play" (ibid: 45). In contrast to Gray, however, she bases these physical actions in a rigorous and detailed construction of the characters' background. She emphasises that a director should select "the simplest and most logical impressions of what happened in each character's past" (ibid: 25). Mitchell's characters belong to a model of

reality exhibiting its wholeness. She is not interested in seeing the actors in the process of constructing figures, and discourages more far-ranging explorations of behaviour and conscious virtuoso performances as we will encounter with Steven Scharf's Rocky Raccoon routine in *Three Kingdoms*: "Preparing a biography [...] will help you stop an actor from inventing a tuba-playing, ex-ice-skating manic depressive [...] in order to make their performance 'interesting'" (ibid: 24). Her exercises to explore motivations, objectives and given circumstances reflect a lot of the work the actors in *Crave* were familiar with and used in their personal preparation even though Gray did not focus on it in the rehearsals themselves.

Mitchell's mise-en-scène of new writing is characterised by this dramatic realist investigation of characters even more than her other work. In an interview on her rehearsals for Stephens' *Wastwater*, she states:

I always feel [...] that if you're the director of the first outing of a play, then you have a profound responsibility to share the play accurately and precisely, because sometimes you can negatively fingerprint a play and maybe ruin its future life. We did a fantastic exercise that made Simon [Stephens] laugh a great deal, in which I ran through each of the scenes and wrote a list of questions about the back history of everything that happened. There must have been about 40, 50, 60 questions per scene.
(cit. in: Lukowski 2011)

She strongly believes that her careful building of characters' backgrounds and motivations is serving the text – the aim is to find an "accurate" representation, not a reimagination. Unlike the German directors who work closely with the texts, such as Kriegenburg, Mitchell does not display a simultaneous belief in the freedom "die Regeln für jede Inszenierung neu [zu] schaffen" [to create the

rules anew for each mise-en-scène] (Berger 2003: 64). Instead, she chooses to “position the text as arbiter between yourself and the actor” and suggests to “ask what it is that the writer intends” (Mitchell 2009: 120). The dominance of the text and the director’s task of decoding its instructions is especially clear in this quotation.

In her rehearsals, Mitchell works with a wide range of exercises to layer her interpretation of the text. Consistent with her Stanislavskian work on character, she creates a unified subtext that is meant to be decoded as a sign for the characters’ ‘true’ interiority: “the body is one of the main means by which the audience ‘read’ emotions – and understand what is going on inside a person” (ibid: 155). Simon Stephens’ believes that if Mitchell had directed *Three Kingdoms* instead of *Nübling*, “the Trickster [a silent figure not present in the original script but introduced by *Nübling*] would have been realised absolutely in the subtext of what the characters are doing to each other on stage” (Stephens cit. in: Peters 2011h). In the first of the three duologues of *Wastwater*, Harry (Tom Sturridge) is both anxious and eager to leave his foster mother Frieda (Linda Bassett) for a new life in Canada. His body reveals this through a nervous twitchiness, contrasted with Frieda’s calmer, resigned demeanour. The gestures of Mitchell’s actors are largely metonymical rather than metaphoric. We will encounter a similar approach in Gray’s work on movements in *Crave*, however with the important difference that the fragmented nature of the text and its use of figures or voices rather than characters constantly provided a counterpoint to the purely metonymical gesture of dramatic realism. It clearly emerges from Mitchell’s brief account of her methodology that in spite of her more experimental approaches to adaptations and classics, Mitchell’s work with new writing remains within a dramatic realist British directing tradition. Rather

than setting herself up against this “emphasis in our culture [...] on speaking words well” (Sierz 2009: 16’29-16’33), she seeks to offer “an addition to that which is studying human behaviour and reconstructing it accurately” (ibid: 16’37-16’42). The perception of her work on new writing in the German-speaking world reflects this. Christine Dössel writes about Mitchell’s *Wastwater* as presented at the Wiener Festwochen 2011 that it “dem Ruf des britischen Theaters, ganz ohne Regietheatermarotten auszukommen” [fulfils the reputation of British theatre to get along without directorial foibles] and present “pures, extrem realistisches Schauspielertheater” [pure, extremely realistic actors’ theatre] (Dössel 2011).

Sean Holmes is a more complex case with regard to British directing methodologies for new writing. In the last years, his work has engaged with a more Brechtian, performative style of acting, especially in his productions of Simon Stephens’ plays. His staging of *Pornography* for example has been characterised as “a brilliant exercise in Brechtian alienation” (Coveney 2009). In this production, he also displayed the constructedness of his stage worlds by having the sound engineer on stage and all of the actors present continuously. Like Gray, however, he remains within what Tiedje calls an “implicit” style of performance that I have identified as typical of the British tradition of upstaging in contrast to the more “explicit” and excessive German ‘Rampensau’.³⁵ This reduction in *Pornography* “allows the words and the stories to do their work” (Billington 2009).

I have already discussed in chapter 1 how Holmes also goes beyond a metonymic representation of gestures through direct audience address in

³⁵ Literally: a pig on the forestage, meaning an actor or actress who constantly ‘hogs’ the audience’s attention. I will discuss the contrast between British upstaging and the German Rampensau in more detail later on.

Pornography. For his production of Stephens' *Morning* (Traverse Theatre 2012), he has developed this further: "there are numerous examples of this kind of deliberate disconnect between stated action and the way it is performed" (Haydon 2012b). Holmes' experimentation with gesture and the conscious contrapuntal use of objects links him with Gray, although neither of them seems to fit in with what I have described as the larger British trend. It is therefore important to realise that their divergence from this trend has its roots in a conscious orientation towards a German or European style of directing. There are still traditional British elements within Holmes' approach, such as his faithfulness to the text as described in Stephens' anecdotes about cuts (cp. 'The Director's engagement with the text'). In an interview with Heather Neill, Holmes also uses the familiar language of the director as the servant of the text when reflecting on his rehearsal process of the Filter production of Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Filter is a devising company that has also worked on classic plays, and their approach is mainly defined by its improvisatory use of sound. Yet even within this work, Holmes feels that as a director "you absolutely serve the writer's intentions but in a way that is very free and creative" (cit. in: Neill 2006: 2'54-3'00). Tellingly, he contrasts this to his approach to contemporary plays, for example by Brian Friel:

If you're doing say a Brian Friel play [...], the parameters of translation for example are much more defined, and your job as a director [...] is in a way like a conductor to get the rhythms and the details and the story and the clarity. (cit. in: *ibid*: 3'15-3'38)

We can see that at this point in his career, Holmes was only starting to embark on an exploration of different forms of performance in the staging of new writing. It can be argued that this development was much influenced by his work with

Stephens, starting with *Pornography*. By then, Stephens himself had already been influenced by Nübling's directorial approach, and *Pornography* was written as a reaction to this directorial language. Therefore, we see German directorial trends transposed to Great Britain through the dialectical relationship between writing and staging. One example in Holmes' earlier work on Stephens' plays is his free rearrangement of the text in *Pornography*. On the other hand, this also made the play more dialogical, thereby bringing it closer to the British tradition. The influence of German directing was intensified through Holmes' involvement in the production of *Three Kingdoms* as the artistic director of the co-producing Lyric Hammersmith Theatre. Haydon explicitly identifies this imprint in Holmes' and Stephens' latest collaboration, *Morning*: "The style of "Sean Holmes's production" is – well, a quick shorthand might be to say: 'Sean Holmes seems to have spent a lot of time hanging out with Sebastian Nübling during *Three Kingdoms*'" (Haydon 2012b). Crucially, Haydon sees Holmes' directing not as purely imitative, but as a valid fusion between British and German directing methodologies: "It is pure mid-North Sea sensibility; a naturalised synthesis, itself only in its infancy. It's certainly the best German I've ever seen a British director do" (ibid). Since *Morning* was also devised with two groups of young actors from Switzerland and Great Britain, it encapsulates a crucial step away from the divide between new writing and new work identified by Alex Chisholm that still dominates much of British theatre. Similar to Gray, Holmes' practice indicates the range of British directing where a rootedness in the traditions of dramatic realism meets a German influence of theatrical realism, and texts – even of new plays – begin to be regarded as material for a larger theatrical montage.

If Holmes is on the one end of the spectrum of directors of new writing, the older Max Stafford-Clark is clearly situated on the other, more traditional end that still dominates the directing of new writing in Great Britain. When watching a range of European plays at a Festival in Luxembourg in 1995, he “realised how out of step with the rest of Europe is our text-based Anglo-Irish theatre tradition”, but after facing, as he expressed it, “twenty minutes of a director-dominated Eurotrash version of *Faust*”, he was “cherishing our values afresh” (Roberts and Stafford-Clark 2007: 191f). He pithily contrasts German and British approaches in an interview with Ianthe Roach: “In this country, you start with the play. In Germany, you start with the concept of the play” (cit. in: Roach 2012). Stafford-Clark was instrumental in developing many current methodologies during his long career dedicated to contemporary playwrights, starting with his work at the Traverse Theatre Edinburgh (1966-1972), through his work with The Joint Stock Theatre Group (1974-1981) and as the up to date longest serving Artistic Director of the Royal Court (1979-1993) up to his current work with his company Out of Joint (1993-present). Uniquely amongst both the German and the British directors discussed so far, he nearly always participates in the development of the play. He describes his approach as follows:

The working pattern consisted of an initial workshop with actors and writers, followed by a gap in which, if all went well, a script was developed by the writer, which then formed the basis of subsequent rehearsals. (Roberts and Stafford-Clark 2007: xvi)

This methodology was particularly characteristic of his work with Joint Stock. In his last phase, working with Out of Joint, the initial workshop phase is less developed and can be skipped completely. Nonetheless, his participation in the

development of the script remains a strong feature, for example with Ravenhill's *Some Explicit Polaroids* (1999).

Another aspect of his work that was extremely influential is his use of actioning, as Mark Ravenhill experienced during their work together: "he's actioned the whole scene the night before, so on the whole he'll suggest the actions because otherwise it would take for ever [sic]" (Roberts and Stafford-Clark 2007: 199). Like Mitchell, Stafford-Clark also develops the character backgrounds in great detail with his actors. For Sebastian Barry's *The Steward of Christendom* (1995), he described how he tries "to supplement the information about Thomas's [the protagonist's] daughters. Who is the best cook? Is there a competitive spirit? Who has the mother role? Does Thomas 'remember' them accurately or are they his nightmares?" (Roberts and Stafford-Clark 2007: 188). Improvisations are mainly used to expand the company's knowledge about the characters and to fill in scenes before the play or in gaps of the play, such as "Nick's kidnapping of Jonathan, and his relationship with Helen" (ibid: 203) for *Some Explicit Polaroids*. Hence, Stafford Clark focused on character background even in a play where the author himself "didn't really feel it was terribly important to the play, which I'd written as a kind of urban fairy story" (ibid: 198). Stafford-Clark's investment in a social and psychological rootedness of a performance thus holds true even with plays that steer more towards theatrical realism.

He supplements this work with a careful patterning of metonymic gestures. We have already seen in my discussion of his mise-en-scène of Stella Feehily's *Bang Bang Bang* in chapter 1 how gestures in his productions are directly linked to the emotional subtext of the characters, but can nonetheless

achieve a complex ambiguity. However, in all their ambiguity, the gestures always supplement text, music, lighting and other visual aspects. Unlike with the German directors, they never operate as a separate contrapuntal track, as Stafford-Clark's following description of one moment in *The Steward of Christendom* exemplifies:

He then sleeps, and as the lights fade I directed Willie, played by a beautiful and sensitive young schoolboy, Jonathan Newman, to place his arm protectively across his father's chest. The combination of the story, the music and this gesture made for a moment of almost unbearable tension and poignancy. (ibid: 189)

The gesture of the protective arm is a clear example of the nuance so typical of the metonymic mode of dramatic realism, where all stage elements are subsumed in a unifying model. Stafford-Clark is not interested in "die herkömmlichen Bedingungen des Spiels zu hinterfragen" [in questioning the conventional conditions of performance] (Tiedke 2009: 94) like many of the German directors. This becomes especially clear when comparing his two productions of Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982 and 2011), a play that in itself tends more towards a theatrical realist direction. There were some small differences in the way Stafford-Clark re-staged the play, for example, the blocking of the opening scene. In the 2011 production, the famous women from history and legend arrived individually on a staircase leading down to the restaurant, thereby creating a moment of introduction. However, the director did not change his overall approach to the play with regards to a concept or performative mode. Both productions are dramatic realist mise-en-scènes set in the Thatcher area. Stafford-Clark's dedication to dramatic realist modes of directing was recognised by Churchill. After having cooperated on six new plays

with him (their long-time collaboration is comparable to the one between Kriegenburg and Loher or Gosch and Schimmelpfennig), she decided against him directing *Far Away* (1998) because, as Stafford-Clark records in his diary, “she feels that the play is not realistic” (Roberts and Stafford-Clark 2007: 177). Yet even though Stafford-Clark is in many ways one of the strongest representatives of the traditional, text-serving strand of directing new writing in Great Britain, this approach is by no means exclusive in his practice. In fact, his background is much more experimental and Roberts remarks that “it is ironic, given Stafford-Clark’s reputation as a text-based director, that La Mama’s work [one of his early influences] seldom left a text intact” (ibid: xv). We can see a resurgence of this more experimental strand in his use of “movement exercises” which were based on “Jungian archetypes” for Ravenhill’s *Some Explicit Polaroids* – as Ravenhill observed, this is something “which you don’t associate with Max” (cit. in: ibid: 198). It demonstrates again that while it is possible to identify certain trends in the directing of new writing in Germany and Great Britain, these trends are never exclusive. It is especially the directors’ reaction to the formal and stylistic suggestions of the individual play that leads to a constant shifting and re-mixing of available rehearsal methodologies.

Production circumstances of *Three Kingdoms* and *Crave*

After this contextualisation of directorial trends in Britain and the German-speaking countries, my comparison of the productions of *Three Kingdoms* and *Crave* will focus on an investigation of the rehearsal methodologies employed by Gray and Nübling specifically, especially with regard to the staging of narration and gesture. As a consequence, my discussion will be structured

thematically and not chronologically. In this, I consciously construct my own narrative of the rehearsals, structured by the research questions of my thesis. This subjective approach seems justifiable when remembering that there cannot be “eine richtige Darstellung eines Probenprozesses, sondern nur unendlich viele” [a single correct presentation of a rehearsal process, only an infinite number of them] (Wartemann 2011: 247). Moreover, it is in line with “the ethnographic model of participant observation” (McAuley 1998: 77). The freedom to draw upon all stages of rehearsals will allow me to isolate specific methodologies, their development throughout the process, and the problems that might be associated with them. I will engage particularly with the way the directors worked with the texts in order to establish a link to my earlier analysis of the texts and their use of narration and/or dialogue. Following on from this, my scrutiny of the different uses of improvisation in both rehearsal processes hopes to answer questions about representational strategies and the role of potentiality. I will also investigate the role metaphorical and metonymic gestures play in the directors’ exploration of potentiality. I will elucidate how issues of narration, improvisation and gesture are closely related to different ways of constructing the relationship between role and performer. Again, these different ways play a crucial part in the directors’ representational strategies. I will close the account of my rehearsal observations with a brief outlook and a consideration of the reception of the two plays, from which I hope to gain a clearer understanding of intercultural questions arising from the sharing of methodologies.

I will rely on interviews with the directors, the actors, and – in the case of *Three Kingdoms* – the writer in order to incorporate different perceptions of the rehearsal process. This allows me to integrate the participants’ personal

perspective on the rehearsal process, especially where they differed – for example, between Nübling and the British actors. The interviews for both productions were “semi-structured” qualitative research interviews, allowing for “the respondent’s more spontaneous descriptions and narratives” (Brinkmann 2008). They were conducted in the final week of rehearsals³⁶, and this allowed a stronger focus on the *process* instead of the result. Nonetheless, the different narratives are often those of hindsight, justifying and arranging different aspects of rehearsals with an eye towards the production’s shape at the time of the interview. The aim of my investigation is to examine how the directors use methodologies belonging to both dramatic realist and theatrical realist traditions. Does a clear dividing line between those approaches emerge in the two rehearsal processes? Or do they rather combine both to varying extents? This question of the selection and combination of rehearsal methodologies is especially pertinent in the context of texts that consciously play with narrative elements. Annemarie Matzke highlights how the dialectical relationship between text and performance as defined by Poschmann (cf. chapter 1) also extends to rehearsals: “die Probenpraxis [beeinflusst] auch den dramatischen Text grundlegend” [rehearsal practice also fundamentally influences the dramatic text] (Matzke 2012: 113). The “Dreischnitt vom Drama über den Inszenierungsprozess zur Aufführungspraxis” [triad from the drama via the process of mise-en-scène to performance practice] is not a “linearer Prozess, sondern reflektiert die Wechselwirkungen der verschiedenen künstlerischen Praxen in ihrem jeweiligen historischen Kontext” [linear process, but reflects interactions between the different artistic practices in their respective historical

³⁶ The exceptions to this are the interviews with Nübling and Tennant. For logistical reasons, I interviewed Nübling in October 2011, after the performances in Munich had taken place, and Tennant in January 2012 prior to the first UK performances in March. Both of these interviews were conducted via Skype.

context] (ibid: 113). My own directorial work in chapter 4 will then continue to put this methodological mixture into practice, allowing for extended reflection on the chances and challenges it offers.

In order to be able to compare Nübling's and Gray's rehearsal methodologies, it is also important to put them into the context of their productions and their material, historical, and social circumstances. Historically, there has been a "Verschiebung der Probenkonzeption von der Prüfung über die Übung zum Versuch" [shift in the conception of rehearsals from an examination of practice to experiment] (Matzke 2012: 281). We will later see how elements of these different historical stages emerge in the contrasts and similarities of British and German rehearsals. This is already partially inscribed in the terminology: "der englische Begriff *rehearsal* verweist auf die Wiederholung" [the English term *rehearsal* refers to repetition] whereas the German *Probe* highlights the "Aspekt des Versuchs und der Prüfung" [aspect of the experiment and its examination] (ibid: 94). This does not mean that English rehearsals are devoid of experimentation, yet it raises the question if these experimentations occur within a more clearly defined framework than the German ones and are less engaged in questioning the theatrical models of representation. Stephens wrote the text of *Three Kingdoms* in response to a project conceived and executed by him and Nübling as a co-production between Germany, Great Britain, and Estonia. The theatres that eventually agreed to participate in this project were the Münchner Kammerspiele, the Lyric Hammersmith, and NO99, and the production played in all three countries. In addition, *Three Kingdoms* brought together actors from all three countries: from Great Britain, Nick Tennant and Ferdy Roberts as the main characters Detective Inspector Ignatius Stone and Detective Sergeant Charlie Lee, and

Rupert Simonian; and from Germany Çigdem Teke, Steven Scharf, and Lasse Myhr; as well as seven actors of NO99's company. According to Sean Holmes, the Artistic Director of the Lyric Hammersmith, the main difficulty in realising this co-production was the different availabilities of actors in the *en-bloc* performances of the British system and the repertory German system (Holmes cit. in: Peters 2011a). In Britain, actors are not part of an ensemble attached to a theatre, but are hired specifically for the production. At the end of the rehearsals, the play is presented in what Gerlach-March calls a "*limited-run*" or "*en-bloc*" system, usually for one to four weeks (cp. Gerlach-March 2011: 61). *Crave* was a production of the Actors' Touring Company (ATC) under Artistic Director Ramin Gray. It premiered at the North Wall Arts Centre in Oxford on 29 March 2011 and then toured Great Britain in tandem with a production of Ivan Viripaev's *Illusions* by the same director and cast. The cast consisted of Derbhle Crotty as M, Cazimir Liske as B, Rona Morison as C and Jack Tarlton as A.

Structurally, one of the crucial differences between *Three Kingdoms* and *Crave* lay in the length and organisation of rehearsal time. Such divergences are the results of the different overall structuring of the theatre systems in Great Britain and the German-speaking countries. Due to greater commercial pressures, rehearsal times in Britain are mostly not longer than four weeks. In the German-speaking countries, in contrast, the theatres usually have an ensemble of actors who rehearse a play for six to eight weeks. The performance then becomes part of the repertoire, i.e. is regularly alternated with the other performances of the repertoire over a longer period of time (cp. *ibid*: 64).

Rehearsals for *Three Kingdoms* (final length c. three hours) took place in all three countries, starting with an initial three-day meeting and read-through in Munich (8-10 June 2011) in which the whole cast and creative team participated. This was followed by nine days of rehearsal in London (14-24 June 2011) during which Nübling mostly worked with the British actors, later joined by Myhr and Teke. After the rehearsals in London, Nübling worked with the German and British actors in Munich in a complete replica of the original set for rehearsal purposes for 14 days (28 June -15 July 2011) before travelling to Tallinn to start the final period of rehearsals with all actors present. This final period took place over 19 days, with a holiday break in between (19-29 July, 5-16 September 2011), and culminated in the premiere on the 17th of September 2011 at the NO99 Theatre in Tallinn. I was present during the first read-through in Munich, for eight of the nine days in London, the last four days of the rehearsals in Munich, and for the final five days of rehearsal in Tallinn. The overall rehearsal time of 45 days (or roughly nine weeks) is more or less standard in the German municipal theatres, whereas the British actors were much more used to rehearsal periods of three to four weeks. For example, Rupert Simonian said about the initial rehearsal week in London that “this is the first time I’ve only done one scene for a week” (cit. in: Peters 2011a). In contrast, *Crave* (final length ca. 50 min) was rehearsed over four weeks between 27 February and 29 March 2012. For this process, I attended the first three days, three days during the third week, and the final four days. In addition to a shorter rehearsal time, the rehearsal day itself was structured differently in the two productions. For *Crave*, which adopted a British structure, rehearsals took place between 10.00 am and 6.00 pm, with a longer lunch break and roughly 2 short tea breaks, resulting in rehearsal slots of approximately two

hours. For *Three Kingdoms* however, which followed a German model, the rehearsals usually took place between 10.00 am and 2.00 pm and 5.00 pm to 10.00 pm, due to the repertory system. Roberts observed how “working for three [...] or four hours solidly on the same thing over and over and over again can be quite disheartening” (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e). Overall, the additional time for rehearsals in *Three Kingdoms* had an impact on the way the British actors were used to working. We will see later how this time is crucial for Nübling’s very open approach to rehearsing.

Before writing the playtext for *Three Kingdoms*, Stephens did some initial research in the countries and wrote the script in English. The second and third act, which take place in Germany and Estonia respectively, were then translated into German and Estonian, to be played by actors from these countries in their own language and to be accompanied by surtitles. It was felt by director and actors alike that the resulting German translation by Barbara Christ did not fully live up to Stephens’ language. Based on his previous experience with Stephens’ work in Germany, Nübling commented that the “generelle Problem der deutschen Übersetzungen von Stephens [ist, dass] der Humor durch einen Sozialkommentar ersetzt wird” [general problem of the German translations of Stephens [is that] the humour is superseded by social commentary] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d). Other linguistic aspects, such as the colourful and varied swearing which suffered in translation, made it difficult for the actors to find an “Atmosphäre [...] an einer Figur die durch die Sprache entwickelt wird” [disposition [...] in a figure that is developed through language] (Scharf cit. in: Peters 2011f). Language also proved to be an occasional difficulty during the rehearsals themselves. English was the main language of communication between the director and the actors, especially those from Great

Britain and Estonia. Nübling himself pointed out the difficulty of discussing complex questions of the *mise-en-scène* in a foreign language: “da gabs manchmal serienweise Missverständnisse, nicht auf einem ganz groben Level sondern auf einem etwas feineren” [sometimes there was a whole series of misunderstandings, not on a very broad level, but on a more nuanced one] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d). These “finer” levels were often those of etiquettes of communication within the rehearsal room. As an observer of many of the rehearsals, Stephens highlighted for example Nübling’s use of the word “boring” in rehearsals: “I don’t think he completely understands the gravitas of the word in English. [...] I’ve seen him say that to actors and leave them [...] completely devastated” (Stephens cit. in: Peters 2011h). Whereas Nübling probably intended to say that a given moment was not quite developed yet and needed more, be it in terms of visual inventiveness, energy, or atmosphere, the British actors understood this to be a fundamental comment on their acting and their inventiveness as a whole.

Another aspect that significantly affected the production of *Three Kingdoms*, down to the very structure of the playtext, was the decision of the original actor for Ignatius Stone, Paul Brennen, to leave the project during the rehearsals in Munich, approximately in the middle of the overall rehearsal period. He was eventually replaced by Ferdy Roberts within a period of four days. Roberts now played Charlie Lee, but the character was changed in such a way that he shared many of the traits Stone had in the original version, for example his knowledge of German. This was done so that Tennant did not have to relearn his text. According to my conversations with the remaining actors, Brennen decided to leave the production due to artistic differences. He felt that Nübling was spending too much time on improvisations and not engaging

enough with what the text itself had to offer. *Crave* was met by similar misfortune when the original actor for A, Laurence Mitchell, had to withdraw due to personal (not artistic) reasons, again around the middle of the rehearsal period. It took Gray quite a while to find a replacement, so Jack Tarlton only joined the company with just under two weeks of rehearsal left. For *Crave*, this resulted in a necessary focus on the text and an abandoning of many of the ideas for movement and props.

In the case of *Three Kingdoms*, the reason for Brennen's resignation might also at least in part be related to the structures and hierarchies of communication in the rehearsal room. These were also reflected in the different ways my presence as an observer manifested itself in the two productions. *Three Kingdoms* had a large team consistently present throughout rehearsals: in addition to Nübling, this included Kammerspiele dramaturg Julia Lochte, NO99 dramaturg Eero Epner, composer Lars Wittershagen, assistant director Philip Decker and assistant designer Teresa Vergho, occasionally joined by Simon Stephens and designer Ene-Liis Semper. The actors, especially those from Great Britain, often felt separated from the creative team. Roberts highlighted how "theatre has changed in Great Britain [...], it has become much more collaborative" whereas he felt that Nübling was not "in conversation with his actors" but instead "would allow a scene to run, stop it, and then quietly whisper to his team" (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e). From Nübling's perspective, this separation was also caused by the fact that he felt that the British actors were "waren sehr brav mir gegenüber, in der Regel" [usually too well-behaved towards me] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d). Rehearsals for *Crave* with its much smaller team did not create the same sense of segregation between actors and creative team. In addition to the director, the only other

constant presence in the room was stage manager Altan Rayman. They were joined occasionally by designer Lizzie Clachan as well as a range of so-called 'mystery guests'. These consisted of people related to the original production of the play, such as actor Alan Williams or Kane's brother Simon Kane, but also of interested observers who responded to invitations on Twitter. In their interviews, the actors especially emphasised "the democracy of the rehearsal room [...]: not only are our contributions welcomed, they are expected" (Crotty cit. in: Peters 2012b). The openness of the communicative structures was "atypical [even] in British terms; rehearsal rooms are much more constructed" (ibid), i.e. regulated in terms of hierarchies of communication and creative input. Unlike the separation between Nübling and his cast, which was also perceived to manifest itself physically, with Gray "there is no distance between him and his actors. Not even physically [...]. He finds it interesting [...] to be in the space, walking around and figuring things out" (ibid). This sense of togetherness was certainly facilitated by the relatively small and homogenous nature of the group, but Gray also sees British actors generally as supportive; they are knitted together and want to create something rhythmically together (cit. in: Peters 2012a). Fluid group interaction and a sense of give and take are key. My own involvement mirrored these structures. In *Three Kingdoms*, I was much more of a silent outside observer "watching us hawk-like" as Simon Stephens put it (cit. in: Peters 2011h). In this comment, Stephens highlighted my position as participant observer which ethnographer Margaret Mead describes as a "balance between empathic involvement and disciplined detachment" (cit. in: McAuley 1998: 77). I only rarely participated in discussions, mostly when there were few people present, and was usually not explicitly invited to make a contribution. When tensions surfaced in the rehearsal room and the director wanted to negotiate

especially personal situations, I was occasionally asked to leave, reflecting McAuley's description of how the academic observer can be perceived as "an irritation, tending to increase the stress levels (hence the tendency to ask observers to leave the rehearsal if relations between participants are becoming severely strained)" (ibid: 80). However, this situation only occurred once or twice, at the beginning of the rehearsal process, when Nübling was working with Brennen and Teke on the scenes between Ignatius Stone and his wife Caroline. In hindsight, Nübling's decision to ask me to leave can be read as an attempt to protect and reassure an actor that was already starting to communicate his discomfort and confusion vis-à-vis the rehearsal methodologies. During the rehearsals for *Crave*, Gray repeatedly asked me for my point of view throughout the process, and I participated much more actively in the discussions.

The director's engagement with the text

After a brief analysis of the circumstances of the rehearsals, the first step for my investigation of rehearsal methodologies proper will be a consideration of how Nübling and Gray approached their respective playtexts in preparation for and during rehearsals. The text of *Three Kingdoms* changed significantly between the version for the first read-through and the final version. One of the changes that Nübling introduced from the very beginning was the additional figure of the Trickster, played by Risto Kübar. The Trickster represented "the spirit of malevolence" in the play (Stephens cit. in: Peters 2011h) and embodied the dark alter ego of the main character Ignatius Stone. He also served as a psychopomp, a Janus-like figure and occasional guide between the different worlds of the play. Especially his repeated use of the microphone created a

special level of intimacy with the audience that underlined his psychopomp function between auditorium and stage.³⁷ The director's introduction of a new character into the play initially surprised many of the British collaborators. Stephens described how he "remember[s] very vividly the phone calls from the producers at the Lyric, who couldn't understand why there was this actor who was part of the budget but who didn't have a character" in the play (ibid). The Trickster was mostly silent, apart from some songs and the occasional taunt. While not adding to the text as such, Nübling did intervene significantly into the structure of the play and its representation.

During the rehearsal process, Nübling and Stephens also started reworking the text itself. It was clear from the beginning that some cuts would be needed – the initial reading had lasted over three and a half hours. Having worked with Nübling before (at the latest on *The Trial of Ubu*, Toneelgroep Amsterdam 2010), Stephens wrote a text that was both tailored for and a challenge of the director: "I wrote a long play because I knew he'd cut it. I wrote with the scope for a lot of doubling because I knew he'd like it. [...] And I tried to do fairly few stage directions because I knew he'd ignore them" (ibid). Director and playwright worked closely together on these cuts, but usually Stephens would take Nübling's suggestions. The cuts included specific place references (the German section was originally set in Hamburg when they still considered a co-production with the Schauspielhaus Hamburg) and some information that was culturally specific to Great Britain (for example, the discussion of beheadings and the reference to the killing of the American businessman Nicholas Evan Berg in Iraq in 2004). This treatment of the text as

³⁷ For more thoughts on the psychopomp and the microphone, refer to chapter 4.

material was initially often unusual and even unsettling for practitioners in a British context. Stephens illustrated this with an anecdote:

I came back from working with Sebastian on *Ubu*, in which he'd cut 65% of my text, [...] and created a show around a skeleton of the play. We came back to the rehearsal room with Sean [Holmes, who was rehearsing *A Thousand Stars explode in the Sky* at that point] and Sean gave me a really serious look when I walked in and said, 'There's something I really want to talk to you about.' [...] He got me to sit down and said, "In this scene, the stage direction, 'she stands up and hugs her', I just don't think we can make that work, so we are going to cut that. Is that alright? (Stephens cit. in: Peters 2011h)

It was unusual for the British actors to engage with a new play yet also apply methods of devising and improvising text to it.

In addition to cuts, Nübling rearranged text to create monological sections out of dialogue. For example, in the final performance text, the moment when Tommy finally cracked under the pressure exerted by the two detectives and told his story was presented as a monologue:

I was in the William Morris.

On Tuesday.

Last Tuesday. The Tuesday we just had.

The eleventh of June. (Stephens 2011b: 14)

Originally, this had been written as a dialogue, where the detectives keep on interjecting questions. A trace of this could be seen in the way Tommy is correcting himself at the start of the monologue – this was originally a reaction

to a question. According to the director, this change to a monologue form was intended to “das Verhörmuster auf irgendeine Art brechen, das sich die Hälfte des Stückes oder noch mehr durchzieht. [...] Es ging nicht um Abwechslung, es ging darum wie man Drucksysteme aufbaut” [break the pattern of interrogation somehow which otherwise dominates half of the play or more. [...] It was not about variety, but about how to build systems of pressure” (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d). These changes turned dialogue into narration, and liberated the director to develop a more independent, metaphorical gestural language. The director also suggested new material for texts. Rather than using the playtext as a fixture from which to develop the characters’ relationships, Nübling preferred to explore possible relationships between characters in all directions and then adapt the text accordingly. The relationship between improvised material and text was therefore a dialectical one during rehearsals, with the initial text providing the theme and the broad shape of improvisations, but also constantly being changed by them. Stephens described their work on new textual material as follows: “Very early on he was getting me to write a lot more text [...] nearly all of which has now been cut” (Stephens cit. in: Peters 2011h). The main negotiation between playwright and director was focused on the questions of whether themes should be expressed more directly or more indirectly: “I said to him, it’s better the characters don’t say what they’re thinking, you stage it and allow the audience to interrogate it. [...] That was a shift in our working relationship” (ibid). However, in contrast to Stephens’ judgement of value, I would align the direct verbalisation of themes more with the narrative tendency of German-language plays while an indirect exploration with its reliance on subtext is more closely related to the dialogic nature of British plays. Nübling’s request for more direct and explicit statements, such as Aleksandr Richter’s

vociferous monologue in the first act of the play, moved the playtext and the performance more towards an exploration of potentiality in the gap between words and gestures, and therefore turned a more dramatic realist engagement with representation into a more theatrical realist one.

The constant reworking of the text was a challenge for the production. Especially the third act rehearsed in Estonia was only finalised in the last two weeks of rehearsal. Nübling also kept on experimenting with the ending right until the dress rehearsal. In contrast to the original version of the text where the play closes with a discussion between Ignatius Stone and his wife Caroline, Nübling was keen to find something that could close both the realistic and the surrealist strands. He started by introducing the Trickster as speaking Stone's lines, with the detective just as a physical presence. The final version that made it into the production cut out Caroline completely and had the Trickster challenge Stone to a session of origami. Myhr commented on the difficulties inherent in this fluidity of the playtext: "Ich fand das [...] schwierig, dass man ungestrichen in die Probenarbeit gegangen ist mit drei verschiedenen Nationen, mit drei verschiedenen Probengewohnheiten" [I found it [...] problematic to enter into a rehearsal process combining three different nations, three different rehearsal traditions, with an uncut version" (Myhr cit. in: Peters 2011c). Overall, Nübling's emphasis was on improvisations on the atmosphere surrounding the text, so that the speaking of the text itself would fall into place: "Sprache formt sich, indem man sich körperlich betätigt" [language is shaped through physical actions] (Myhr cit. in: Peters 2011f).

Gray's approach to the text of *Crave* was the complete opposite. Of course it is important to remember that an on-going development of the play

with the playwright was not possible for him. Moreover, *Three Kingdoms* was the world premiere, whereas Gray staged the second professional production of *Crave* in Great Britain (with the exception of Liquid Theatre's brief revival of the play at the Battersea Arts Centre in 2004). Nonetheless, Gray at least opened up the possibility of different versions of the text by bringing in Kane's unpublished second draft for the initial read-through, which differs significantly from the published play; for example, in the inclusion of specific details such as indicators of an Irish identity for M. This early experiment of Gray's was however abandoned without further impact on the rehearsals. Rather than improvising with and around the text, Gray set out to elucidate the text as much as possible. For him, the author's biography was the key to this endeavour: "If I can understand what generates the lines and the commas [...] I know I can direct it" (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c). Therefore, Kane's personal experience of body disphoria became a key concept in the production. Overall it is revealing that while Nübling did not know the text particularly well even by the end of rehearsals ("Ich merk auch oft gar nicht, was die Leute reden oder ob sie Scheiß reden auf der Bühne" [I often don't even notice what people are saying or if they're talking bullshit on stage], Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d), Gray was nearly as familiar with the lines as the actors. Unlike Nübling, he was less interested in problematising the ability of the words to provide access to interiority. Instead of an oscillation between empathy and distance through the contrast of narration and gestures, Gray privileged the words over gestures to explore the form of *Crave*, a complex mix of dialogue fragments, short narrative sections and an overall dialogical montage of the individual voices, as extreme interiority, not only of the figures, but to an extent also of the playwright herself.

In the light of these two very different treatments of the text – a dialectical relationship between text and rehearsals and a linear one – the ‘read-through’ of the text and any concomitant work with and on the text around the table also took on different shapes in the rehearsals for *Three Kingdoms* and *Crave*. The diverging perceptions of the status of read-through rehearsals at the table pose important questions for each rehearsal situation, for example about “der Bedeutung des dramatischen Textes im Verhältnis zu anderen Elementen der Inszenierung” [the relevance of the dramatic text in relation to other elements of the mise-en-scène] or “dem Verhältnis von Schauspieler und Rolle, dem Verhältnis von Lesen und Textualität” [the relationship between actor and role, the relationship between reading and textuality] (Matzke 2012: 190). Both productions opened with a first communal reading of the text, with the actors reading their own parts aloud. The basic tradition of beginning rehearsals with such a ‘read-through’ or ‘Leseprobe’ exists in both countries. It is in the handling and length of this period that the two productions varied. For *Crave*, Gray worked a lot with the actors on different readings of the text while seated around the table. Even though he “always find[s] the initial read-throughs really pointless [...], because the actors never get the music of it” (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c), the ensuing deeper investigations of the sound and structure of the text played a crucial part in his rehearsal methodology. The first week of rehearsals was focused nearly exclusively on readings. For example, Gray asked the actors to address each line clearly to one person for the second reading. This was followed by readings where each actor delivered their text en bloc. Another version explored the dialogical aspects of the text by splitting it into two conversations between A and C on the one hand, and B and M on the other. In yet another version, the director instructed the actors to read especially slowly

so as to create a sense of sharing and learning in contrast to the aggressive tone that had dominated earlier readings.

Gray returned to this concentrated work on textual delivery throughout the rehearsals and used it to explore colouring, pauses, punctuation, and rhythm. Figures and situations were created through this exploration of text: “Being very disciplined about the punctuation and the structure of the lines” could “fuel the emotional life necessary” for the figures (Liske cit. in: Peters 2012d). Nübling, however, moved away from the reading around the table as soon as possible. He started working on a stage image even on the first day. Ignatius Stone (Tennant) and Charlie Lee (at this stage still Paul Brennen) interrogated Tommy (Simonian) as the suspect of a crime:

IGNATIUS What have you done to your hands Tommy?

TOMMY I don't want to talk about it.

IGNATIUS No?

TOMMY If you don't mind.

IGNATIUS I don't blame you.

TOMMY Thank you. (Stephens 2011a: 1)

Nübling wanted to explore the physical dimension of the relationship of these three characters more than the way they related to each other through dialogue. He therefore suggested different arrangements in space, for example Tommy standing in the middle whilst Charlie and Ignatius sit on the far left and right of him, arranged on one straight line. Instead of attempting to excavate the logic of the dialogue, the director encouraged the actors to “disconnect the answers from the questions” (Nübling cit. in the original English in: Peters 2011a).

Tennant commented in this first week of rehearsals that he is used to spending more time with the text and Stephens seconded this with his observation that a British director would investigate “the character’s experiential condition and the backstory and the offstage world” before moving on to physical rehearsals in the space (Stephens cit. in: Peters 2011h). Whereas Gray spent a lot of time to establish the logical connections of the text and to explore layers of meaning encoded in it, Nübling approached performance and character from the outside in, starting with the actor’s presence, with images and embodiment, and adapting the text if necessary.

Rehearsal methodologies overview

Before analysing some aspects of Gray’s and Nübling’s rehearsal in detail, I want to explore some fundamental assumptions that underpin their practice. Both directors are characterised by an open, flexible approach to rehearsals and state that they do not follow a particular structure or formula for rehearsal. According to Crotty, “with many other directors there would be an idea of, in a four-week rehearsal process, not just having a shape by the end of week three, but really having certainties. And in those certainties you find play” (Crotty cit. in: Peters 2012b). She explicitly contrasted this with Gray’s approach. Most actors in *Three Kingdoms* had a similar opinion of Nübling’s rehearsals. Teke, for example, emphasised how “sein Ausgangspunkt ist [...] Improvisation” [his starting point is [...] improvisation] (Teke cit. in: Peters 2011g). As we will see in my detailed analysis of improvisation, there was a larger element of free play, without any rules or structures set by the director, and this could often be difficult for the actors. On the other hand, the British actors in particular had a

nearly diametrically opposed impression of the rehearsal process. Roberts noted “you get the sense that he [Nübling] wants total control of it” and is “giving ideas more than waiting for ideas from the actors” (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e). It seems to be the case that in an attempt to account for cultural differences in acting, the director attempted different strategies for actors from different countries.

Roberts’ critique also extended to Nübling’s use of games and exercises: he was “not necessarily that knowledgeable about [...] what actors need or want, or what they can gain from playing some games that might help create something” (ibid). Again, “what actors need”, as well as the nature of the games probably needs to be contextualised culturally. It is true that games and exercises only played a minor role in rehearsals. Most prominent was the ball game Four Square, which mostly served as a physical warm-up, a shared ritual for bonding, and a way to free the actors from any concerns situated outside the rehearsal room and to allow them to focus fully and freely. This scarcity of exercises certainly differed from Gray’s approach, in spite of the fact that he sees himself as not especially versed in any specific exercises and to a great extent relies on the actors’ suggestions. Nonetheless, Gray acknowledged the importance of games at an early stage for the actors to see each other’s “ticks and traits” (cit. in: Peters 2012a). Liske also reflected on how “through games, [you] become [...] intimate with each other and the text (Liske cit. in: Peters 2012d). Roberts’ observation on the lack of games in the rehearsals for *Three Kingdoms* therefore reflected a certain desire on the part of the British actors to have a more structured way to begin improvising with the text and with each other. This highlights how a ‘free’ approach to rehearsals takes different, partially culturally influenced shapes with both directors. I develop this idea in

my following observations on the three key aspects of Gray's and Nübling's rehearsal methodologies: layering; improvisations; and the ontological status of the actor between figure and self, representation and presentation.

Composition: montage and atmosphere

Both Nübling and Gray experimented with a complex arrangement of the stage's verbal and non-verbal sign systems that was not dictated by the concern of overall coherence and depth characteristic of dramatic realism. The directors deliberately aimed for a visibility of the constructedness of the worlds arising on the stage. The compositional technique that dominated *Crave* as well as *Three Kingdoms* was that of the montage, where the relationship between potentiality and act of any sign is destabilised. Lochte described this deconstruction of a strictly logical relationship of inference and deduction between text and gesture as follows: "man [nimmt] den Text als einen eigenen Track wahr [...], [...] da gibt es die Textspur, aber es gibt auch die anderen Spuren und manchmal ist es gut, sie nicht illustrierend zu verwenden und zu sehr kurz zu schließen" [you understand the text as its own strand [...]; there is a text strand but there are also other strands, and sometimes it is useful not to use this in an illustrative way, or to short-circuit them too much] (Lochte cit. in: Peters 2011b). This was part of the initial concept of the text itself since Stephens set it out as a deliberate challenge, convinced that "Sebastian's work is at its best when there's a tension between his excavation of the kind of interior world or the expression of the physicality or the sexuality or the viscosity of the world and something restraining that", as in this case the logic of the crime story (Stephens cit. in: Peters 2011h).

Music played a strong role in this contrapuntal arrangement of the different 'strands' of the performance. In this context, I use the idea of the counterpoint as a metaphor for the relationship of different aspects of the *mise-en-scène*. This includes the relationship between the verbal and the nonverbal, but also physically abstract and psychological ways of approaching voice and character. My understanding of counterpoint as a technique draws on its definition in music: "the combination of simultaneously sounding" or appearing aspects (Sachs and Dahlhaus 2001: 551), which can show "consonant or dissonant qualities" in their relationship" (ibid: 552) and have an "indeterminate structure, ensured by the fact that there were always several permitted consonances to choose from" (ibid: 834). Nübling explained that for him music is "eine den dramatischen Dialog [...] aufhaltende Ebene" [a level that holds up dramatic dialogue] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d). During the rehearsals he told the actors that the music is sometimes working with them and their objectives and sometimes against them; Wittershagen's music did not therefore simply operate as an emotional intensifier as music often does within dramatic realism. If set in contrast to the development of a scene, it can rather reveal new dimensions of meaning and release different potentialities of texts and gestures. This contrapuntal use of music was often also operative on the level of rhythm: a scene that appeared slow and intense was given a fast music, or vice versa. Rhythm is therefore another element that can "hold up" dramatic dialogue. One example was the Hans Albers song "La Paloma", which the Trickster (Risto Kübar) sung several times. At the beginning of the third act, set in Estonia, the four Estonian gangsters responsible for the porn and trafficking network appeared in suit trousers, vests and boxing gloves. Even though the Trickster's song had a tender, melancholy atmosphere (and was performed accordingly by

the androgynous Kübar), the appearance of the Estonian gangsters was subtly menacing, an effect that was only heightened by the apparent 'inappropriateness' of the music. In *Crave*, Gray used lighting in a similarly contrapuntal way. Describing his approach, Gray explicitly employed this musical analogy: "It creates a dynamic, and the dynamic is pretty much at odds with the way they perform it; [...] it's counterpoint" (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c). For example, he experimented with a blackout just when A starts to begin to tell a story about a little girl who "became increasingly paralysed by her parents' frequently violent rows" (Kane 2001: 185). Instead of highlighting the personal element of storytelling – for example through a softer light or a spotlight – Gray cut the light completely, thereby working against the way the small monologue focuses the audience's attention on A. A thus became an internally focusing narrator of her own self. For the final production, Gray moved this blackout to after the last "*short one syllable scream*" (ibid: 185). In this new place, the light retained its independent quality. It was not simply reactive, but engaged as an active faculty in dialogue with the actors and their text. Both examples demonstrate an increase in a potentiality that is not immediately subsumed in the act.

A contrapuntal opposition of 'tracks' was also often achieved through the contrasting use of foreground and background in *Three Kingdoms*. One of the main features of Semper's stage design was a large panorama window and a door that separated the main playing area (a large, neutral and empty room demarcated by false walls) from the smaller corridor space towards the back, thereby emphasising the depth of the stage. Nübling often used this window to display action in the background that was seemingly incongruous with the action in the foreground. For example, a procession of cleaners was visible

behind the window, entering from stage right and exiting stage left, when Stone and Lee arrived in the lobby of the German hotel. This juxtaposition of two seemingly unrelated activities and situations created a tension that could spark off into new potentialities of meaning. The way the cleaners looked directly at the audience appeared strangely menacing, and this impression affected the action in the foreground by association. The director also used the split between foreground and background to introduce temporal asynchrony for a similar effect. When Ignatius Stone gave his wife Caroline a goodbye kiss when he was about to leave for Germany at the end of the first act, we could already see the hotel lobby with its porters and luggage carriers coming alive in the background. The result resembled a cross-fade in cinema; departure and arrival commented directly on each other and the audience could see how the security of Stone's married life would be completely invaded by the volatility of his obsessive hunt for the mysterious criminal the White Bird.

Nübling's montage extended to his creation and arrangement of different worlds on stage, and to related and equally valid representations of reality exploring different representational styles. During the first rehearsal in Munich the actors and the creative team generally observed that the playtext of *Three Kingdoms* hovers ambiguously between the realistic and the surreal; beginning in the more securely rooted realism of the investigation room in London and ending in the more surreal and intoxicated realm of the bar in Estonia. In his *mise-en-scène*, Nübling attempted to blend these two worlds throughout, with a tendency towards the surreal even in the earlier, more realistic scenes. One way of achieving this was to change Tommy from the victim of the interrogation into a hunter. After experimenting with both versions during rehearsals, Nübling settled for the latter specifically because it undermined our expectations of a

police interrogation. In relation to this stronger emphasis on the surreal, he stated that

Was ich jetzt richtig fand für das Stück, dass man nicht mit so einem sauber erzählten Krimi beginnt, sondern dass es [...] immer auch um eine psychische Dimension [geht], die ist über Atmosphäre präsentiert, oder repräsentiert. Deswegen fängt das Ding auch mit einem Lied an.

[I thought it was right for the production not to start with a clearly told detective story but [...] also for a psychic dimension to be presented or represented through atmosphere. That's why it starts with a song.] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d).

The idea of atmosphere played an important part in Nübling's conceptual thinking. Sabine Schouten quotes the philosopher Böhme's definition of atmosphere as "affektive Gebundenheiten an den uns umgebenden Raum: Atmosphären geben Auskunft, 'wie ich mich, wo ich bin, befinde'" [being affectively tied to the space that surrounds us: atmospheres provide information on 'how I feel in the place where I am'] (cit. in: Schouten 2007: 11). Atmosphere operates through an "Ekstase des Dings" [ecstasy of things]:

Form, Material, Struktur, Farbe und Volumen sind also nicht nur Merkmale, die das Ding als solches bestimmen, sondern Eigenschaften, die in der spezifischen Weise ihrer Anwesenheit den sie umgebenden Raum prägen bzw. "tingieren".

Form, material, structure, colour and volume are not simply traits which define the thing as such, but qualities which imprint or "tinge" the surrounding space through the specific nature of their presence. (ibid: 28).

Hence, what Schouten and Böhme refer to with “ecstasy of things” is the idea that each thing (and this can also be immaterial entities, such as...) is not static and restricted to its physical boundaries, but in its materiality influences the atmosphere of the room as a whole. Highlighting the ecstasy of things means to be aware of the phenomenological, perceptual impact of their presence. Nübling’s approach to a scene was often defined by an investigation of its energetic potential, in which this phenomenological “ecstasy of things” replaced considerations of character motivation or plot development. He demonstrated a belief that is closely aligned with theatrical realism and its desire to reveal processes of creation when he stated that “Realistisch werden Dinge dann, wenn sie widersprüchlich werden” [things become realistic when they are contradictory] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d), echoing Schouten’s remark that the emphasis on atmosphere, in contrast to the methodologies of illusionistic theatre, can sensitise the spectator to his or her modes of perception (cp. Schouten 2007: 85). Nübling wanted to represent the complexity of different potentialities. This experimentation with contrasting atmospheres was visible in one of the first rehearsals in London when he was working with Simonian (Tommy), Tennant (at this stage still playing Charlie Lee) and Brennen (Stone). First the director instructed Tennant and Brennen as the two detectives to be like statues, thereby creating an atmosphere of silence and stillness. In the following exercise, they explored the atmospheric opposite: the detectives were playful and funny, throwing grapes at Tommy and frequently moving around.

Teke described how in her work on her character with the director,

Ich hab jetzt keine Psychogespräche mit ihm. Ich hab mehr Gespräche darüber wie das energetisch im Bild oder in der Szene rüberkommt [...]. Oder er gibt dann schon eine Stimmung an.

[I never had psychological discussions with him. I had discussions about how aspects are communicated energetically in an image or a scene [...]. Or he would provide a mood sometimes.] (Teke cit. in: Peters 2011g)

Roberts commented on this more critically when he compares Nübling's use of atmosphere to filmmaker David Lynch's, whose work was one of the main inspirations for writer and director:

David Lynch is obsessed by narrative, so once he's got his narrative sorted out he can go wherever he wants. This [*Three Kingdoms*] has gone the other way round, I think, the narrative has been slightly destroyed and [...] we're hoping an audience won't necessarily want to follow the narrative but want to look at amazing pictures and be given an atmosphere. (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e)

This concern for narrative was shared by the other British actors. Nübling himself was not opposed to the idea of narrative, but said

Mir gefällt es, eine Geschichte zu erzählen, ich mag auch eine gewisse Linearität auf der Ebene der Story oder auf der Ebene [...] von Entwicklung Figuren, ich glaub einfach nur nicht, dass man eine Figur vorher psychologisch konstruieren kann.

[I enjoy telling a story; I also like a certain linearity on the level of plot or [...] in the development of figures, I just don't believe that you can construct a figure psychologically in advance.] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d)

In his opinion, it is this more ambivalent construction of atmosphere *and* narrative together that sets his work apart from the mainstream of British theatre where "es schon sehr klar ist, auch in der atmosphärischen Erzählung, das ist

komisch, das ist traurig, [...] der Saal kann es sehr genau lesen” [it is very clear, also in the atmospheric storytelling, this is funny, this is sad [...]]; the auditorium can read that very clearly] (ibid). Whereas atmosphere is subjugated to an overarching stable model in dramatic realism, it can work more independently in theatrical realism in creating another potential world.

However, the freedom of such an ambivalent construction can only work if it is at the same time balanced by a framework that at least demarcate an area of interpretation for the audience. According to Lasse Myhr and assistant director Philip Decker, both of whom have worked with Nübling before, this framework is usually provided by his stage designer and long-term collaborator Muriel Gerstner. Through the structuring elements of her design, it was her “die die Atmosphäre kreiert hat [...] in [die] dann Sebastian [...] eingetaucht ist” [who created the atmosphere [...] in which Sebastian [...] immerses himself] (Myhr cit. in: Peters 2011c). Since Gerstner had to drop out on the first day of rehearsals due to personal reasons, this structure was missing. Semper’s stage design was much more open and neutral and did not provide the strong grounding that allows Nübling’s atmospheres to develop their full suggestive force. Indeed, his atmospheric montage and blending of real and surreal elements were most effective when the strong identity of each element allowed for a clear sense of opposition. German director and British actors were reunited in their common interest in these contrasts. Roberts described how they achieved an interesting clash between the surreal prostitute Hele (Mirtel Pohla) wearing a deer’s head and the way the detectives talked to her as if this strange feature was not present. Similarly, Stone’s and Lee’s investigation in the German porn scene, aided by their German colleague Dresner (Scharf) was very matter-of-fact, even though the background was taken over by the very explicit preparations of the

porn actors (putting lube on dildos, stimulating themselves, etc.). Tennant summarised Nübling's work with the actors on atmosphere succinctly: "what we rehearsed was creating atmosphere which essentially is tension, either tension being broken or tension being focused" (Tennant cit. in: Peters 2012g).

Gray has an openly contradictory attitude towards atmosphere when he states that "I'm really against it. But I like it as well" (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c). In his view, his compositional approach to *Crave* was not influenced by the deliberate creation and arrangement of atmospheres. His focus lay on making connections and the necessity of a relatively neutral, muted atmosphere in order to achieve this. This was demonstrated by an exercise early in the rehearsal process. Gray attributes this exercise to Declan Donnellan. Two actors were present in an empty space. The first greeted the second with the following lines: "There is you, there is me, and we are in the space". The second actor returned the greeting with the same text. The delivery needed to be neutral and should not express any notion of status, emotion, accent, and so on. Consequently, the exercise explicitly discouraged the creation of atmosphere by the actors and instead focused on making your partner visible as well as on the basic relationship between the two performers. Gray's and Nübling's use of atmosphere coincided most in their orchestration of the delivery of text. Nübling gave less feedback than Gray on the deliveries of lines. But when he did, mostly at the beginning of the rehearsal process with the British actors in London, he encouraged quick and strong changes of atmosphere in the delivery, so that the detectives would change from friendly to threatening for example. Gray similarly juxtaposed quick changes from one mood to another to bring out the script's quick associative jumps, its "sharp

turns” (Liske cit. in: Peters 2012d). Both directors’ interpretations displayed a fragmented interiority in the constant process of construction.

Improvisation

Nübling’s compositional method of montage was closely related to his approach to improvisations, which he used to generate the pool of extremely diverse material from which the montage is drawn. He did not provide any specific rules or tasks related to characters and their background. At the same time, his improvisations were not devoid of structure, as Bormann, Brandstetter and Matzke demonstrate in their pointed question: “Kann nicht Improvisieren – für die Handelnden selbst und für die Zuschauer – als emergenter Akt erst vor dem Hintergrund von Ordnungsmustern, Regeln und (ästhetischen) Konventionen erscheinen?” [Is it not the case that improvisation can only manifest itself – for both actor and spectator – as an emergent act in relation to a background of shaping patterns, rules and (aesthetic) conventions?] (Bormann/Brandstetter/Matzke 2010: 8). The aesthetic conventions of Nübling’s improvisations were situated as an experiment with the performative presence of the actor in the act of shaping his role. According to Frost and Yarrow, this type of improvisation falls into the third category of the “three major contexts” in which improvisation is used, where “the work focuses not on the reality of the character but on that of the *performer*” (Frost/Yarrow 2007: 19). It is markedly different from the first context in “the (Stanislavskian) tradition of ‘character’ preparation” based on a “relatively clearly defined concept of ‘character’ as the

focus of deterministic forces” (ibid: 18).³⁸ The contrast between these categories of improvisation will emerge in my account of the differences between Nübling’s and the British actors’ understanding of the term ‘improvisation’. Nübling saw improvisations as part of his agenda

möglichst viele Umwege zu gehen, zu gucken, was machen Leute eigentlich so am Tisch, was machen sie in den Pausen, was erzählen sie aus Filmen; etwas rasch ausprobieren, dann wieder zurück zum Text.

[to make as many detours as possible, to see what the people do around the table or in the breaks, what they talk about from films; to try these elements out quickly and then return to the text.] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d)

The aim of this eclecticism was “die Leute frei zu machen davon, darüber nachzudenken, ‘kann ich das jetzt hier tun, ist das im richtigen Rahmen’” [to free the people from thinking ‘can I do this here, is this the right context’] and to understand “Probenprozesse als Materialsammlung” [rehearsal processes as a collection of material] (ibid). Crucially, he related the actor’s total freedom during improvisations to the way other elements like “das Bühnenbild eine Absteckung dessen [sind], was und wie man improvisiert” [the stage design which is a demarcation of what and how you improvise] (ibid), thereby acknowledging the framing function of the stage design and the interpretational problems arising from this that I discussed earlier. Nübling’s use of improvisations did not treat them as a way to generate material for coherent psychological characters. Consequently, they were less target-oriented than improvisations in a dramatic

³⁸ The second context in which improvisation is used according to Frost and Yarrow is “as an exploratory form of theatre” excavating “a more radical acknowledgement of the fragmentation of nineteenth-century notions of a consistent personality” (Frost/Yarrow 2007: 18).

realist context. Matzke's definition of improvisation helps to characterise the function of improvisation in Nübling's rehearsals:

Im Improvisieren wird [...] ein System geschaffen, in dem Dinge geschehen, jenseits der Intention eines individuellen schöpferischen Subjekts. Die Freiheit der Improvisation liegt in der Koppelung mit dem wiederholenden Tun, eingebettet in ein kollektives Szenario von Aktion und Reaktion, in dem Hervorbringen eines nichtintentionalen Funktionierens.

[Improvising creates a system where things happen that lie beyond the intention of an individual creative subject. The freedom of improvisation lies in its conjunction with reiterating activity embedded in a collective scenario of action and reaction, and in the creation of a non-intentional way of functioning.] (Matzke 2012: 227)

Improvisations balanced between structure and freedom therefore play an important role in displaying the processual nature of representation in theatrical realism.

Gray's approach to improvisation was similarly open and not focused on creating psychologically believable characters or logically constructed situations. He stated:

I really don't believe that the actor has to be seeing the pictures for an audience to see them. I don't believe that an actor has to feeling something for an audience to feel something. And I know that a lot of improvisations, a lot of British rehearsal techniques, are about trying to create some sort of reality on stage – I don't buy any of that. (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c).

For Gray, improvisation was simply a way of testing ideas, the actors just “assume this or that” during it (ibid). In spite of the director’s close focus on the text of *Crave*, these explorations were also mainly physical and visual: “sometimes the text becomes irrelevant but the spaces change and roles are reversed”. Like Nübling’s improvisations, they were a way of “resisting narrative” in the sense of a coherent, logically developing plot (Crotty cit. in: Peters 2012b).

Instead of providing rules and setting specific situations to develop characters, Nübling’s free improvisations aimed to explore and construct a type of acting that was more “artifiziell” [artificial] and an “abstrakte Körperlichkeit” [abstract corporeality] (cit. in: Peters 2011a). Rehearsals included two especially long sessions of improvisation that will serve as examples for his approach. In the first of these sessions, director and actors developed the scene in the hotel lobby that opens the second act in Germany in the final production. The second improvisation explored the world of pornographic film making and was integrated into the scene where Stone and Lee question porn film maker Georg Kohler (Myhr) later in the same act. Both sessions took place during the rehearsals early in July in Munich for which I was not present, so my account is based on my interview with cast and crew as well as on the final scenes that came out of these improvisations. Nübling and the actors spent between two and three full days each on improvising the hotel lobby and the porn set. According to the director, one of the main aspects of the first improvisation was an excavation and heightening of foreignness for the arrival of the two British detectives in Germany. The extreme physicality and intimacy of the second improvisation, on the other hand, was also intended for the actors

to get to know each other and to overcome physical boundaries in their play with each other. She describes the porn improvisation like this:

Es ging also in erster Linie gar nicht so ums Nachstellen, sondern um die richtige Atmosphäre da zu greifen. [...] [A]m Anfang war es noch ganz dreckig, mit viel Schokoladencremesauce und Bananenkotze und Keksmatsch, [...] aber im Laufe der Proben wird das eigentlich immer sauberer und immer weniger.

It was mostly concerned not with imitation but putting your finger on the right atmosphere. [...] At the beginning it was very dirty, with a lot of chocolate goo and banana sick and biscuit mush, [...] but in the course of rehearsals it became increasingly cleaner. (Teke cit. in: Peters 2011g)

Both hotel lobby and porn improvisations brought to the forefront cultural differences in the understanding of the structure and function of improvisation. It was no coincidence that Brennen decided to leave the production after these improvisations. Nübling observed how in general “die Kunst beim Inszenieren [ist] welchem Schauspieler, welcher Schauspielerin sage ich was wie, und wann” [the real skill in directing is in knowing which actor or actress should I tell what in which way and when] – even more so when this has to be done in a foreign language (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d). During the improvisations for *Three Kingdoms* the director’s individual interactions with each actor could be grouped into two categories. On the one hand were actors like Steven Scharf, whom Nübling described as the kind of actor whom “man nicht zu viel sagen darft, [den muss man] einfach machen lassen, den Rahmen gut stecken und dann gucken dass er selber entwickelt” [you shouldn’t tell too much, you should just create the frame well and let him work with it himself] (ibid). On the other hand were the actors whom Nübling felt he had to lead “Schritt für Schritt

irgendwo, ganz eng” [step by step somewhere, and very closely] (ibid). Even though the director did not make this explicit, it soon became apparent that these two groups were mostly culturally homogenous. Both Tennant and Roberts observed how Nübling “seems to allow the Germans to improvise all over the place [...] but he doesn’t really like us doing it” (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e). What is more, “he made me feel that I couldn’t do it. [...] And he certainly made Nick [Tennant] feel that way as well” (ibid). It is possible that in trying to “lead” the British actors in a more detailed way and thereby attempting to account for preconceived cultural differences, the director unconsciously discarded possible uses of other forms of improvisation.

What is noticeable in the clash between an inhibition to improvise as seen by the director and a prohibition to improvise as seen by the actors is a different understanding of what improvisation means. The British actors felt blocked in their particular approach to improvisation, but without being given instructions or finding out themselves how to improvise differently. Since they did not know the context in which Nübling’s form of improvisation was working, they felt offended by his “Umkehrtricks” [tricks of reversal] where the director requires the actors to interest *him*, in contrast to the common conception (in Germany and Great Britain) that it is the director’s task to interest the actors in a particular task (von Düffel 2011: 55). Von Düffel’s observation was made in relation to Michael Thalheimer’s work. This can be seen as an indicator that this tactic is used by several directors in Germany, whereas it is largely disregarded by directors in Great Britain. We have already encountered a similar cultural difference in relation to the word ‘boring’. Unfortunately, the implications of these different contexts for improvisation were largely not discussed, thus missing an opportunity to connect these different forms. Especially with regard

to improvisation, it was not acknowledged that actors participate “an einem professionellen Wissen, nicht zuletzt an einen Know-how des Improvisierens” [with professional knowledge, not least in the know-how of improvising] which can be “vielfältig fragmentiert” [fragmented in many ways] and from which “es sehr unterschiedliche Teile sein können, die sich die Schauspieler jeweils angeeignet haben” [the actors can have acquired very different aspects (van Eikels 2011: 120). What was missing in the rehearsals for *Three Kingdoms* was the space to develop a shared language and standard of assessment of improvisations. For the British actors, improvisation was more structured and has a clear logical progression aimed at creating a believable character: “Improvisation is a means to an end, it’s a tool that you use in order to break through something or find something”, for example, “relationships between characters” (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e). Consequently, it was closely related to the unfolding of the plot. For the British actors, the question of *why* they were repeating a scene or doing an improvisation remained unanswered (cp. Tennant cit. in: Peters 2012g). Nübling’s form of improvisation instead aimed at accumulating a diverse range of material; instead of a diachronic construction of a linear progression of actualities, it explored the synchronic exploration of potentialities. This was problematic for the British actors because they perceived this accumulative process as endless repetition without a clear aim, a complaint that was voiced throughout the rehearsal process. Moreover, the material itself that was created through these improvisations was not seen as crucial for an ideal performance as judged by a British dramatic realist standard. They felt they were just “creating pictures” and spent “too much time on background than [...] on foreground” (ibid).

This dismissal of the background is crucial for our understanding of the communicational problems between Nübling and the British actors, since we have already seen that foreground and background are no longer related in a hierarchy of meaning, as in dramatic realism, but exist as independent and equal 'tracks'. Director and actors felt at cross-purposes in these situations because they were not sharing the same goal and were working with different assumptions of what improvisation 'should' do. This also extended to moments of crisis. Within Nübling's system of improvisation, such moments of crisis bring about a special performative energy that can be exploited. Not only are crises not detrimental, but "die Probe [findet] ihren Sinn eigentlich gerade darin, jene Krisensituation herzustellen, die Neues hervorruft" [the rehearsal finds its meaning specifically in the creation of situations of crisis which engender something new] (Roselt 2011: 20). However, these moments only registered as creative crises or imaginative blocks within the British system of improvisation. None of the two forms of improvisation – improvisation as a process of collecting material and improvisation as a way to build characters – are necessarily superior. It is important to emphasise that the German actors also occasionally struggled with Nübling's form of improvisation: "Die Kehrseite dieser Medaille ist, manchmal fühlt man sich als Schauspieler auch im Leerlauf und man sucht und man sucht und man sucht, und dann kann das sein, dass man sich auch länger in dieser Phase befindet" [On the downside, you sometimes feel to be freewheeling as an actor and you search and search and search, and it is possible to get stuck in this phase for quite some time] (Teke cit. in: Peters 2011g). The extreme openness of his improvisations was also complicated by a larger number of actors: "ab vier oder fünf ist das sehr schwierig zu improvisieren, weil da kollidieren Ideen oder Energien, da

kollidieren verschiedene Verständnisse die Leute von einer Szene haben” [it is difficult to improvise with four or five people, because ideas or energies collide, different understandings of a scene collide] (Scharf cit. in: Peters 2011f). The German actors did not always find the frequent repetition of improvisations useful, although for slightly different reasons than the British ones:

Wir haben diese Pornoszene, die ja nur ein ganz kleiner Teil, ein ganz kleines Element dieser Inszenierung ist, eine Woche lang probiert. Dann kommt das einem ein bisschen so [wie] Jugendtheater....[...]. Ich arbeite ja auch mit Jugendlichen, und da muss ich das auch immer einfordern, und durch öfteres Wiederholen, dass man da seine Angst verliert, aber ich hab keine Angst mich ab und zu auszuprobieren und so, und deswegen kann man das vielleicht auch schneller einfordern.

[We rehearsed this porn scene for a week, which is only one small element of the performance. It felt a bit like youth theatre. [...] I work with young people myself, and with them I also have to demand to lose the fear through frequent repetitions, but I don't have any fear to try out things once in a while and therefore you could have demanded results quicker.] (Myhr cit. in: Peters 2011c).

Where the British actors felt lost in the repeated improvisations because they could not see the purpose of creating a coherent collection of visual and atmospheric material, the German actors felt that from a certain point onwards, repetitions did not necessarily make this collection more diverse. The British actors queried their function within a dramatic realist framework (creating a model of reality defined by its wholeness), the German actors within a theatrical realist one (creating many different worlds). The problems that both British and German actors encountered during the rehearsals for *Three Kingdoms* show a

remarkable similarity to assistant director Stephan Suschke's description of Heiner Müller's rehearsals for *Hamlet/Hamletmachine* (1989/90):

Hauptproblem scheint die unterschiedliche Auffassung zum Entwicklungsstand der Produktion zu sein, resultierend aus der Probenmethode. Bis zu diesem Durchlauf hat Müller die Proben vor allem als das Zusammentragen von Material verstanden. Er verweigerte sich dem Fixieren von Arrangements, hielt sich mit szenischen Anweisungen zurück, ließ durch 'Ratlosigkeit' eine ungeheure Menge an Material erspielen. ... Problematisch ist diese Probenmethode vor allem für Schauspieler, die ihre Rolle auf einem psychologischen Fundament aufbauen.

[The main problem seems to be the different perception about the state of development of the production; this is a result of the method of rehearsal. Up until this run-through Müller understood the rehearsals mainly as a collection of material. He refused to accept positioning on stage as fixed, abstained from scenic instructions, had a huge amount of material generated through 'perplexity'. ... This rehearsal method is problematic especially for those actors who create their roles on a psychological foundation.] (cit. in: Matzke 2012: 269)

What emerges in this description is again how director and (some) actors are at cross-purposes. A clearer communication about and a mutual sharing of different forms of improvisation could have opened up new hybrid forms that might have profited both German and British actors and that would have suited the intercultural nature of *Three Kingdoms*.

My observation during the rehearsal for *Crave* underlined my identification of cultural differences in improvisation while at the same time

questioning any rigid application of the concept. Improvisations during the rehearsals for this project were comparable to those in *Three Kingdoms* in their questioning of a psychologically constructed character. However, Gray did not necessarily share Nübling's visual and physical focus, as demonstrated by his belief in the importance of the playwright's biography in his approach to the text. Gray located these different approaches to improvisation in culturally different ways of acting tellingly encapsulated in the derogatory expressions identifying their extremes. When German actors are criticised for being a 'Rampensau' (literally: a pig on the forestage, meaning an actor or actress who constantly 'hogs' the audience's attention), this comments on their tendency towards highly energised acting and conscious excess. When characterizing each acting style in his interview on *Three Kingdoms* with Jacqueline Bolton, Stephens remarked on "the confidence and attack of the German actors" (Stephens cit. in: Bolton 2012b: vii). British actors in contrast 'upstage' their colleagues. This term is an equivalent to the German 'Rampensau' since in its figurative meaning, it also describes a way "to direct attention from (a fellow performer) to oneself, to 'steal the scene' from" ("up'stage, v.". OED online. September 2013). The difference between the German and the British mode however emerge if we turn to the original technical meaning of upstaging: "To move upstage of (another actor), forcing him to face away from the audience" (ibid). Instead of increasing the energy and occupying the foreground, the British actors who upstage pull focus through increased stillness and an isolated position in the background that lets them stand out from the mass. Stephens underlined how the British actors "brought nuance and specificity to the language" (ibid). Nübling's preference for visually excessive scenes was more easily met by the 'Rampensau', whereas Gray's exploration of textual meanings was more suited to the reductive powers

of 'upstaging'. Consequently, Gray's improvisations were similarly driven by a more interior focus, and still worked a lot with explorations of motivations and background even though these were more diverse and fragmented than in strictly character-based improvisations. Instead of constructing interiority, Gray's improvisations were aimed at constructing plural interiorities. They took the basic approach of improvisations from the tradition of dramatic realism, but fragmented it and multiplied it to show a whole range of individually consistent figures developed from the inside out. As a result, the cultural difference that became apparent in the rehearsals for *Crave* was not one between character-based improvisation and visual-atmospheric improvisation, but one between varying degrees of coherence and logical construction of characters on the one hand and figures on the other. During the improvisations for *Crave*, it was Cazimir Liske, an American actor trained in Russia, who occasionally felt he did not know where they were going. He described that

in my Russian education of improvisation, improvisation is something you can do only when you know everything about what you are doing, who you are, and other given circumstances, when you have a very concrete motivation. (Liske cit. in: Peters 2012d)

Stanislavski defines these 'given circumstances' as

the story of the play, its facts, events, epoch, time and place of action, conditions of life, the actors' and regisseur's interpretation, the mise-en-scene [sic], the production, the sets, the costumes, the properties, lighting and sound effects [...]. (Stanislavski 1986: 51)

Liske's statement demonstrated the importance of accumulation and logical construction in the shaping of a character that remains consistent throughout a

performance, with his motivations and objectives developing in a linear way. At the furthest extreme of dramatic realism, improvisations therefore solely rely on a singular internal focalization, on one point of view. Gray's use of them expanded this to a juxtaposition of several internal focalizations, similar to the way Schimmelpfennig often represents events from several points of view (cp. chapter 1). In this way, he was able to open up the representational strategies of dramatic realism.

Improvisation with Events ('Vorgänge')

I am now going to look more closely at the details of Gray's and Nübling's forms of improvisation. In particular, I will investigate what elements replaced character-driven aspects, such as given circumstances or background stories as instigators or themes for the improvisation and thereby provide at least a minimum amount of structure. I have already mentioned music as such a(n) "Improvisationsangebot" [invitation to improvise] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d). Nübling's close work with the composer and musician Lars Wittershagen, who was present throughout in the rehearsal process, allowed him to use music and sound with precision and to let it enter into an active dialogue with the actors on stage. Thus, music served as one of the main instigators of what Nübling calls Events ('Vorgänge'): sequences of physicality, possibly combined with text, which are not motivated by a notion of character but by questions of energy and atmosphere. His work with Events was characterised by its focus on the physicality of images, positions, and the use of props. In one of the early rehearsals in London, Nübling explicitly contrasted improvisation around Events with one focused on character. When Teke voiced her impression that there

was no development during the first scene between her character Caroline and her husband Ignatius Stone (Tennant), the director stated he was looking for Events instead of character development. He then suggested an option for such an improvisation of an Event. Since Caroline and Ignatius are discussing a flower she has found on the heath and which he identifies as a “blue tuberose” (Stephens 2011b: 25), Nübling asked Teke to draw tuberoses on the wall of the set and use that as a starting point. In our interview, the actors emphasised that “Improvisieren ist ja eigentlich erstmal eine körperliche Sache, und nicht so intellektuell, das ist ja auch das Gute am Improvisieren, da entstehen Sachen die man sich vorher nicht hätte ausdenken können“ [improvisation is firstly a physical thing and not so intellectual. That is the good thing about improvising, that things are created which you couldn't have thought up beforehand] (Teke cit. in: Peters 2011g).

Events often sought to establish a conscious contrast between voice and body. This could take the shape of a contradiction between words and actions; for example when Stephanie Friedmann (Teke) told Stone (Tennant) that “You don't look like Paul McCartney at all” in a neutral tone while the closeness of her body suggests intimacy (Stephens 2011a: 76). Nübling's improvisation of Events was associative more than logical, according to his principle to free the actors from trying to fulfil expectations. His free associations extended to rehearsal jokes and even misunderstandings. During the first reading of the playtext, some actors understood ‘rugs’ instead of ‘drugs’ when Tommy (Simonian) talked about the possible contents of the rucksack he was given by the mysterious figure: “I was going to look inside it in case it was like a lot of money or something. Or like drugs or guns or something” (Stephens 2011b: 14). Nübling extrapolated from this a possible speech impediment for Tommy.

Accordingly, some of the early rehearsals included improvisations around a bandaged tongue and the effect this had on the atmosphere of the scene, until the idea was abandoned later on when it was decided that Tommy should be less of a victim. The exploratory nature of this approach helped to highlight the propositional, instable nature of the worlds created on stage.

Gray also mainly structured his improvisations visually and physically even though they were more closely concerned with an investigation of interiority through text than Nübling's. The use of props played an especially large part in the rehearsals for *Crave*. Around the middle of the rehearsal period, he brought in a whole range of props, including wigs, shoes, male and female clothes, balloons, beer cans and so on. He encouraged the actors to improvise with these, but did not provide more detailed rules or suggestions. He told them: "use them or don't use them but [...] try to interact with them and try to involve somebody else in the interaction" (Crotty cit. in: Peters 2012b). This emphasis on interaction underlined that the improvisations were less about Events around the props themselves and more about the props as a way to unlock relationships between the figures. Gray felt that "it is quite easy to create images, but what's the point?" (cit. in: Peters 2012a). Instead, he always tried to relate the physical improvisations back to one of the many fragmented figures or voices they had identified in the text. His improvisations therefore retained notions of character as a structuring element to a larger extent than Nübling and his work with Events.

Improvisation of metaphoric gestures

As we have seen, both Nübling's and Gray's improvisations heightened the importance of physicality, setting it alongside the text and investigating the potentialities opened up by this equality. Consequently, the gestures and use of props in *Three Kingdoms* and *Crave* consciously played with a transition from a metonymical to a metaphoric dimension as described in chapter 1. An analysis of a range of gestures the directors found as well as of their occasional struggle establishing a contrapuntal relationship between text and gesture will help to illustrate the chances and difficulties of working with narrative texts, and more generally of releasing potentialities within theatrical realism. Nübling explicitly said that "[Körperlichkeit] interessiert mich meistens mehr als der Text. [...] Ich gucke einfach, was die Körper erzählen" [physicality interests me more than the text. [...] I look at what the bodies are telling me] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d). Consequently, neither dramatic dialogue nor narration could have any sort of primacy in the communication of plot or atmosphere. As Roberts observed:

I think he [Nübling] got worried; he said, 'but nothing's happening in that first scene with Tommy'. Well, there's a lot, it's happening in the words, and that seemed to be the big difference between a German way of working and an English way of working, because in England they rely on words [...] and it didn't seem that he trusted [that] fact. (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e)

Not content with the conflict communicated through the verbal interrogation, the director used improvisations to create gestures that could heighten, question, or undermine the text. "Den Kontrast [zwischen Text und Körperlichkeit] such ich immer" [I constantly search for this contrast [between text and physicality] (Scharf cit. in: Peters 2011f). It was "eine sehr körperliche, abstrakte

Herangehensweise, die glaube ich über konkrete Handlungen auf der Bühne funktioniert” [a very physical, abstract approach working through concrete actions on stage, I think] (ibid). This was often problematic for the British actors whose physicality “mainly came from [...] the text” (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e). The playtext of *Three Kingdoms* offered certain obstacles for this approach, since “viel Informationen vermittelt werden müssen” [so much information has to be communicated] (Scharf cit. in: Peters 2011f). Various improvisations of the first scene between the detectives and Tommy involved his injured hand. During rehearsals, Tennant offered a possible logical explanation for it – Tommy could have injured his hand when climbing over a fence in his quest to rid himself of the incriminating rucksack. Such an explanation could be used as a character background and provide objectives for the actor’s relationship to and use of his injured hand. Nübling countered such an approach: “That is a really British explanation. Think about something Rupert [Simonian] can *play* with more. We can even change the injured body part” (cit. in the original English in: Peters 2011a). The gesture only became interesting to Nübling when it ceased to be metonymic.

One of the strongest examples of such a metaphorical gesture occurred in the third scene of the first act, shortly after the interrogation of Tommy is concluded. Stone and Lee went to Peeter Koppel (Jaak Prints) from the Home Office to find out the results for the autopsy of the prostitute’s body. While informing them about the details of the beheading, Koppel peeled an apple with a large knife. Dressed as he is in a large black leather apron, he looked like a cross-over between a doctor and a butcher, and the knife could easily have been his tool of trade; the connection to the autopsy was therefore immediate. In this context, the peeling and chopping of the apple became the metaphorical

representation of the mutilation of the prostitute's head – an image all the more sinister in that it did not illustrate but instead stimulated the audience's darkest imagination. When rehearsing this gesture, Nübling encouraged Prints to make it less detailed and mannered but faster and stronger. This decreased the metaphorical element without eliminating it, thereby giving the gesture a slightly more normal look and allowing it to arise more fluidly from a more simply metonymic signification in which the peeling of the apple might just stand for Koppel's appetite after a long day of work. Nübling did not invent this metaphor; instead it was found through his method of indirect approaches and free play. Roberts described:

In the rehearsal Sebastian didn't have a clue how to do it because he doesn't want to sit and listen to information, which that scene is. [...] And [...] I was just playing around with an apple in my hand and Jaak [Prints] started messing around with the apple, and Sebastian went 'good, do that, that's it, good, done'. (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e)

The director did not invent metaphorical gestures, but created situations which allowed them to arise, and then selected and modified them to bring out their metaphorical potential as well as their rootedness in the actuality of the scene.

The conversation between the detective and Peeter Koppel then developed into another strong metaphorical gesture. This is again established through a contrasting of foreground and background. While the conversation (the communication of information relevant to the plot) took place in the foreground, two of Koppel's aides had placed the naked body of the Trickster (Kübar) on the ledge of the large panorama window. Framed in this way, the image evoked strong associations with Christ in the Tomb, as for example depicted on the Isenheim Altar. This immediately introduced an otherworldly

atmosphere to this scene that contributed to and was simultaneously heightened by the sinister peeling of the apple described above. At the end of the scene, after Koppel and his aides had stitched up the corpse of the Trickster, they exited together with detective Lee, leaving Stone alone with the body. He inspected it surreptitiously, and then put his hand on the folded hands of the corpse, which suddenly came alive and grabbed Stone's hand. Stone struggled to pull free and only managed this with a major effort. He was clearly perturbed by what has happened, and left the stage. This whole sequence had no direct relevance to the plot and was in no way suggested by the playtext. Nonetheless, it was crucial to create an atmosphere that infused the matter-of-fact discussion of how the prostitute was killed with the danger and mystery of the actual killing, yet without resorting to obvious illustration or graphic violence.

Other improvisations leading to gestures were less able to balance a metonymic connection to the overall development with the metaphorical potentialities of the moment. In Act Two, set in Germany, Stone and Lee's investigation lead them to Aleksandr Richter (Myhr), who had been the pimp of the prostitute killed in London. In reworking the text during rehearsals, Nübling again asked Stephens for a more monological version in which Richter explained his crude and violent philosophy:

What fucking right has somebody who wears shoes like you got to ask me about my work? I'm sorry jiminy-cricket it doesn't work like that. You know how it works? I buy the suit. I fuck what I want. You dumb fuck-holes nod quietly and say "yes massir" as softly as you can and take your fucking shoes off at my front door. (Stephens 2011b: 32)

Nübling was looking for an equally strong physicalisation to accompany this verbal outburst. In the final performance version, Richter jumped up on a table

and delivered part of his speech from there, as if on a soap box. He also performed a head-stand (on the table!), and closed the scene with a routine from kick-boxing. The main aspect of all these gestures was their high level of energy. Unfortunately, their metaphorical potentiality did not develop beyond this; they did not create further levels of meaning contrapuntal to the situation, but exhausted themselves in simple illustration. Moreover, they did not arise fluidly from the context, and had no metonymic meaning in it. Instead, they registered a harsh rupture. The function of these gestures seemed to be a purely negative one of working against the text. When Myhr asked Nübling about the kickboxing routine, the director did not provide a positive explanation of its possible meanings or its relationship with the rest of the scene and only justified it by saying that otherwise Richter “is only annoyingly didactic” (cit. in the original English in: Peters 2011a). When the gestures failed to achieve the balance between metaphor and metonymy, their metaphorical potentialities themselves were emptied out, since one point of the “association by comparison” that characterises metaphor is missing (Jakobson cit. in: Lodge 1979: 73). These gestures then became a superficial visual frisson that seemed to try to disguise an underlying emptiness of meaning.

Gray also initially experimented with a contrapuntal relationship between gestures and words, in which both tracks are independent and have equal significance. The director was especially interested in developing a gestural language in order to find a different approach to the play than its first production, where the four actors were seated on chairs and mostly static. The cast worked on these movements until the final week. While Gray repeatedly expressed a nagging feeling of dissatisfaction with the way the movements turn the audience’s focus away from the words, I perceived several small but

charged moments where the actors created figures that served as a grounding and motivation for the voices. For example A (Tarlton) described how “a small dark girl sits in the passenger seat of a parked car. Her elderly grandfather undoes his trousers and it pops out of his pants, big and purple” (Kane 2011: 157-158). During one of the rehearsals, Crotty and Liske were aligned with the girl and the grandfather simply by being addressed by A and by sitting together. This association was increased when Liske leant back on the words “back seat”, thus creating the impression of the grandfather relaxing in his seat while opening his pants. Similarly, Crotty later became the little girl who remembers how she “ran through the poppy field at the back of my grandfather’s farm” by sitting cross-legged (ibid: 159). Since the actors were not playing consistent characters, each of these small physical changes could take on metonymic meaning. This was noticeable since the overall approach to gestures in early rehearsals was *not* metonymic but mostly unrelated to the stories. Liske observed how in contrast to his Russian training where physicality is strongly connected to “what’s this character motivated by, what’s the centre of his body”, their work with physicality in *Crave* was overall much less tied to dramatic realist ideas of character (Liske cit. in: Peters 2012d). Therefore, each metonymic gesture seemed to congeal out of and flow back into the metaphorical potentialities surrounding it at the rare moments when they occurred. In order to develop non-metonymic gestures, the cast “did a lot of Laban”, for example using an exercise that sensitised the actors to the different levels of the space and how they can fill them through lying, sitting, or standing (Morison cit. in: Peters 2012e).

A metaphorical level was mostly introduced by drawing on the writer’s biography, especially her body disphoria. Gray encouraged cross-dressing as

another way to activate movement and space. In contrast to the metonymic gestures described above, this was not necessarily related to possible backgrounds of the different figures appearing in the text, but happened independent of it. Morison described how she imagined the audience's reactions to these metaphorical gestures: "It wasn't demonstrating anything. [...] The audience would be like 'what is this', but they get an idea of what it was, even if you don't know that she [Kane] had these ideas" (ibid). Their improvisations on gender managed to balance metonymy and metaphor since it was focused on the "transitioning from male to female" (Crotty cit. in: Peters 2012b). Potentialities of meaning were strongest in these transitional, liminal periods where the actor's biological gender mixed with the figure's fictional and enacted gender. Improvisations on gender also included the use of balloons and bananas to represent sexual organs. Props therefore played an important part in the improvisations for *Crave*: "We got all these objects in because we tried to make something more imaginative and metaphoric and free" (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c). The work with shoes continued their exploration of gender, but also introduced other metaphoric potentialities. During the final rehearsals in Oxford, the cast was already working on the actual stage and set, which consisted of a raised wooden U around the stage on which they could sit. While improvising a scene with the shoes, each of them was seated separately on the wooden U, their naked feet on the floor. Next to each of them was a pair of shoes. When Crotty asked about this metaphoric "resonance" of the shoes, Gray suggested that they can signify a road not taken by one of the figures. However, partly due to a lack of time, none of these gestures were developed and *practised* in enough detail to allow the actors to integrate them with the words of the play and activate a cross-fertilisation between words and gestures.

I have mentioned earlier how this shortage of time and the resulting constraints on experimentation is structurally endemic to the British theatre system. To my mind, it was mostly this lack of a precise choreography and practice that created the impression for directors and actors that the movements obscure the text. As we will see in chapter 4, I struggled with a similar problem in my rehearsals for *End and Beginning*, only in reverse: after having spent a lot of time on the development and practice of the gestures, we could not dedicate enough time to the poetic and psychological dimensions of the text, which partially prevented the actors from fully engaging with and owning the situations on stage.

The further rehearsals for *Crave* progressed, the more reduced the gestures and the use of objects became. Finally, Gray decided to strip away all objects and arrange the actors in a static line at the front of the stage from where they would deliver the text largely without movement. Only very few gestures remained, but their metaphorical potentiality was heightened by the overall stillness of the production. Tarlton (A) experimented with such a gesture during his long love monologue. The layout of this monologue suggests a significant break after the first third:

[...] I love your hair your eyes your lips your neck your breasts your arse
your

and sit on the steps smoking till your neighbour comes home and sit on
the steps smoking till *you* come home [...] (Kane 2001: 169)

He decided to wear his jacket buttoned up until then and undo it at this point, “because as soon as there’s no movement, then the smallest movement you’ll make has some significance” (Tarlton cit. in: Peters 2012f). In this instance, the

unbuttoning encapsulated A's excitement, but also took on sinister overtones if seen in relation to his earlier statement "I am a paedophile" (Kane 2001: 156). This gesture was made redundant in the final production by a change of costume to pyjamas. Instead, Gray suggested that the other actors slowly turn away and around during A's monologue. The synchronicity of the movement that showed how the three voices had become one was linked to the play as a whole which can be interpreted as different voices emanating from one mind. Moreover, the gesture of turning communicated an act of distancing from and rejection of A that undercut his declaration of love.

Gray abandoned his exploration of metaphorical and metonymic gestures through improvisations partly due to the time constraints created by Laurence Mitchell's departure. However, he also increasingly felt that the playtext itself was too dominant in its complexity to allow for an independent and contrapuntal movement 'track'. He mused: "why can't you have language and a bit more? Because theatre is like a vessel, and if it's full, it's full – you can't add any more without [...] losing stuff" (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c). This attitude was also closely aligned with what the director saw as a quintessentially British approach to text:

If I say to a German actor, this is funny, they [...] do some physical thing, or they laugh [when saying the line] to show it's funny. But it [German] cannot get the dry wit and humour of English. And that means that German plays therefore flourish in other aspects: the physical, the visual, [...] the plastic, the oral, the lighting – all those things that they have so supremely developed, but developed in part because language isn't enough, whereas for English, language *is* enough. (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c)

In this statement, Gray also developed a theme mentioned by the British actors during *Three Kingdoms*. The actors in *Crave* agreed with Gray on this primacy of language: “It’s hard enough just to process the information that’s coming so fast to the audience, that if you add a lot of movement to that I think you’d be absolutely at a loss to figure out what’s going on” (Liske cit. in: Peters 2012d). I will investigate this question further in the analysis of my own practical projects in chapter 4, where I will suggest that in spite of the experiences of cast and crew during *Crave*, the combination of a complex text with metaphoric gestures might be possible if enough time is spent on the development of each ‘track’ and their combination. In relation to the text of *Crave*, gestures were felt to be most helpful when they physicalised the connections between figures and stories they tried to draw out of the text (cp. Crotty cit. in: Peters 2012b). Yet in spite of the nearly complete stillness the production achieved at the end, they all felt that earlier movement improvisations had been helpful because it allowed them to have “pictures in their heads” that allowed them to “hear the remains of the physical dynamics” (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c). Having explored the potentiality of gestures physically, they were able to incorporate these into their delivery of text. Their delivery gained a suggestive quality which allowed potentiality to flourish in the absence of gesture.

Brechtian figure and Stanislavskian character

Nübling’s and Gray’s improvisational methodologies to different extents relied on a theatrical realist understanding of the actor’s performance that substantially differs from that of dramatic realism. Instead of attempting to become invisible behind the complex logical façade of his or her character, the

actor deliberately plays with the tension between any fragments of character he or she adopts and the underlying persona of him- or herself *as performer*. I will refer to this complex entity on stage as ‘figure’, using the established translation of Pfister’s terminology in *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*. A figure displays both the process and the result of creation as it occurs between performer and audience. It is therefore a prime example for Merleau-Ponty’s realm of in-betweenness connecting exteriority and interiority, as discussed in chapter 1. In contrast to a character, the figure draws attention to the performer as ‘flesh’, “the ontological hinge on which the outside passes over to the inside and the inside passes over to the outside” (Johnson 1999: 31). Jens Roselt also highlights how the performer’s creation of the figure has an outward focus that is “wirklichkeitskonstituierend” [creating reality] as well as an inward one that is “selbstreferenziell” [self-referential] (Roselt 2008: 46). Consequently “the differentiation between the artist and his or her oeuvre that defines other arts is not possible in acting. Actors are their own material, they are creator and created at the same time” (ibid: 117). Roselt here applies Merleau-Ponty’s insight into the phenomenological simultaneity of identity and difference to the process of acting: “this distance is not the contrary of this proximity, it is deeply consonant with it, it is synonymous with it” (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 135).

The performer’s presence as both distance and proximity came to the forefront in both productions at hand. This presence “occur[ed] as persistence between ‘self’ and ‘other’, and so in a traversal of difference” (Giannachi, Kaye, Shanks 2012: 10). That this understanding of the actor as performer is particularly prevalent in Germany is demonstrated by an audition situation for one of the acting schools described by Tiedje, in which the (East German) actor is told “Wir wollen nicht sehen, was Sie können, wir wollen Sie sehen” [We don’t

want to see what you can do, we want to see *you*] (Tilo Werner cit. in: Tiedje 2005: 88).³⁹

Both Nübling and Gray were invested in the exploration of this “difference”. Their rehearsals investigated a procedural, provisional, and continuous sketching of figure in which the performer’s creative activity, the act of invention, remains visible. This performative approach to acting is already visible in the kind of demonstration Brecht describes in ‘The Street Scene’ and is later developed further by Richard Schechner and others in the context of ‘Performance’. Brecht draws out how demonstration activates a constant play with potentialities:

Geht er [der Schauspieler] auf die Bühne, so wird er bei allen wesentlichen Stellen zu dem, was er macht, noch etwas ausfindig, namhaft und ahnbar machen, was er nicht macht; das heißt er spielt so, daß man die Alternative möglichst deutlich sieht, so, daß sein Spiel noch die anderen Möglichkeiten erahnen läßt, nur eine der möglichen Varianten darstellt.

[When he [the performer] is on stage, he will find, identify and make perceptible what he does not do in addition to what he does at all relevant points; that means he performs in such a way that the alternative became as clear as possible, that his performance intuits other possibilities, is only one of the possible variants.] (Brecht 1993d: 643)

Nübling explicitly mentioned Brecht when he encouraged Simonian, Tennant and Roberts to play the interrogation scene in London less realistically and

³⁹ While Tiedje’s factual account of different tendencies in the German-language and British theatrical cultures is succinct and insightful, his inferences from it often turn into a polemic against the German methodology. Therefore my references solely use the factual basis of his account.

instead to arrange themselves more self-consciously on stage and to play stronger and louder (cp.: Peters 2011a). Nübling was also interested in the actors' private presence above and beyond the choices they have as social beings. The creation of a figure was displayed not as a socio-political statement but as a personal investigation. Other German directors, for example Jürgen Gosch and Nicolas Stemmann experiment with similar performative situations. We have already encountered it in my opening description of Gosch's *Vorher/Nachher*, where we witness the actress (Wiebke Puls) engaged in the narrative and performative construction of a woman who is about to betray her boyfriend (cf. chapter 1). When discussing Stemmann's rehearsals, Bernd Stegemann demonstrates how the director cancels the "Schutz, den ihm die Figur und die dramatische Situation gewährt haben" [the protection that the character and the dramatic situation have offered] and replaces it with "Spielmöglichkeiten" [opportunities to play], thus putting the actor into a "Krisensituation" [crisis situation] (Stegemann 2011: 48). A similar crisis was visible in Nübling's rehearsals, especially with regard to the British actors.

Both German and British actors played with this 'demonstrative acting' to varying degrees. Roberts expressed a distrust of purely psychologically realist acting: "I don't do this internal stuff" (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e), and Myhr questioned the principles of Method Acting, especially in theatre: "Warum sollte man sich so derart verlieren?" [Why should you lose yourself to such an extent?] (Myhr cit. in: Peters 2011c). Especially the latter comment demonstrates an awareness of how the actor's personality and approach to his part inevitably colour his figure. Nonetheless, my earlier observations have already shown that the British actors were still overall more reliant on the creation of psychologically motivated character than the German ones.

However, the crucial difference between the two approaches did not so much lie in the presence or absence of a character; even the 'figure' can include notions or fragments of character. Instead, the German and British actors differed in the performer's approach to the role. Schechner emphasises: "the orthodox actor vanishes inside his role. The [...] performer is in a perceivable relationship with the role. What the audience experiences is neither the performer nor the role but the relationship between the two" (Schechner 1994: 166). This disappearance behind the role is part of the concealing strategies of dramatic realism. Stegemann's analysis illustrates how a performative emphasis on the relationship between performer and role for example, affects the act of speaking on stage: "Das probierende Sprechen verleibt sich das Fremde ein, um es als von einem selbst Getrenntes zu erfahren" [the tentative way of speaking incorporates the Other in order to experience it as something separate from itself] (Stegemann 2011: 40). Lehmann offers the following gradation of the visibility of the showing (the performer) in relation to the shown (the character:

1. Stufe: das Zeigen fällt nicht auf, zeigt sich *nicht* als Zeigen (Beispiel Naturalismus);
2. Stufe: das Zeigen fällt auf, beansprucht Aufmerksamkeit *neben* dem Gezeigten (Beispiel: hochartifizielle Darstellungsstile)

Während in diesen beiden Fällen der Akt des theatralen Kommunizierens als solcher nicht eigens thematisch werden muß, ändert sich dies auf der

3. Stufe: das Zeigen tritt *gleichberechtigt* neben das Gezeigte, es wird als Zeigen gezeigt und durchdringt das Gezeigte (Beispiel: Brechts episches Theater). Erst auf der

4. Stufe tritt das Zeigen *vor* das Gezeigte. Das letztere verliert Interesse gegenüber der Intensität und Präsenz des Zeigens bzw. des Zeigenden [...].
5. Stufe: das Zeigen tritt 'gegenstandslos' auf, zeigt nur auf sich selbst als Akt und 'Geste' ohne sicher erkennbares Objekt [...].

[First Stage: the showing is not noticeable, does *not* show itself as showing (example: Naturalism)

Second Stage: the showing is noticeable, it claims attention *in addition* to what has been shown (example: highly artificial styles of acting)

While the act of theatrical communication as such does not have to be thematically addressed in these first two cases, this changes with the

Third Stage: the showing assumes *equal importance* next to the shown; it is exhibited as showing and penetrates the shown (example: Brecht's epic theatre). Only with the

Fourth Stage does the showing step in front of the shown. The latter loses our interest in favour of the intensity and presence of showing or the person who is doing the showing [...].

Fifth Stage: the showing happens 'without an object of reference', it shows only itself as act and 'gesture' without a clearly discernable object [...]. (Lehmann 2008: 192)

The performances of the British actors in *Three Kingdoms* mostly fell into the first two categories: the act of showing can be noticeable, but without

addressing the act of theatrical communication. In contrast, the performance of the German actors corresponded more to the third and fourth category. What is exaggerated in the German 'Rampensau' is exactly this awareness of the performer's virtuosity in displaying his or her relationship with the Other, and the act of showing (the virtuosity) assumes an importance equal to or above that of the shown (for example the text). One could speculate whether Brechtian methodologies have had a stronger influence on German actor training than on British ones. Roberts' openness to this kind of acting was an exception and closely related to his work with the company Filter which employs similar improvisational methods. He stated himself that while "Nick [Tennant] is interested in the why [...], me as an actor, I'm not interested in the why" (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e). The question of the 'why' is strongly related to "the aspect of technicality and craft in acting and arranging" which Tiedje finds characteristic for the British actor and which occupies "eine stärker akzeptierte Position in ihrem professionellen Selbstverständnis" [a more accepted position in their professional self-conception] (Tiedje 2005: 93).

The need for a logical integration of each action into the *character's* motivation was apparent when Tennant discussed one of the strongest moments of direct audience address he experienced as Stone. During the second act set in Germany, his character slipped into what seems to be a hallucinatory nightmare after meeting Stephanie Friedmann (Teke), a curious doppelganger of his wife Caroline and a sexual temptation. He chased her around the hotel, but was constantly fooled by the sexually more aggressive Trickster (Kübar). At the end of this chase Stone was utterly exhausted. He turned to the audience and told them: "If I wasn't such an innately optimistic man I'd suggest that this is a complete waste of time. Us being here. / I'd

propose that we all go home” (Stephens 2011b: 45). He then took a bow. Tennant described this moment as follows:

I think there you comment on [...] this character in this situation. [...] It was interesting to be able to do that in what is essentially a dark psychological piece. To step out, comment on it, and step back in.”
(Tennant cit. in: Peters 2012g)

For Tennant, the commenting on the character was the exception, a singular act motivated and sanctioned by the extremity of the situation. The demonstrating element was therefore related back to the logic of plot and character. Nübling however was not interested in such a stepping in and out of character: “Die Verschmelzung find ich eigentlich interessant. Wo Text und Subtext und auch Schauspieler und Figur parallel laufen.” [I am more interested in the fusion. Where text and subtext and also somehow actor and figure run parallel.] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d).

Such a parallel existence of performer and figure (echoing Schechner) is more visible in narration than in dialogue, since the figure the actor plays needs to be narrator of and character in his story at the same time. Focalization, the question of ‘Who sees?’ gains a greater importance in the exploration of different and often competing subjectivities. In spite of the introduction of more such narrative passages during rehearsals, “there isn’t a great deal of scope for direct audience address in *Three Kingdoms*. And actually, although in the early days of rehearsal, quite a lot of it was played out, [...] at the moment hardly any is” (Stephens cit. in: Peters 2011h). This lack of narrative passages could be identified as a further obstacle for the British actors in adopting a demonstrative acting style, since the dialogic structure of the play seemed more closely

aligned with their character-driven approach. This was for example evident in the preparation of the British actors in reaction to the original script. Like Tennant, Simonian entered the rehearsal process with an understanding of acting as the seamless creation of character: “I thought how can I most naturalistically portray this character, you know, walking down... going to Shepherd’s Bush, seeing the White City Housing Estate [where his character Tommy lives]” (Simonian cit. in: Peters 2011i). Their problems with the improvisation of Events as discussed earlier stemmed from this difference in approaching figures. Whereas Nübling was interested in integrating the actors’ private, personal side in the material for improvisations, aiming at a figure that oscillates between performative actor and fictional character, the British actors mostly focused exclusively on character and therefore disregarded the usefulness of more associative material. For the director, this personal aspect of performance “muss nicht persönlich aussehen, es kann in einer artifiziellen Form daherkommen, aber ich hab das Gefühl, ich erleb auf irgendeine Art den Menschen, der dahinter [hinter dem Charakter] steht” [does not have to look personal, it can take an artificial form, but I have to have the feeling that I am somehow experiencing the human person behind [the character]] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d). Such performative presence is not actively built or assembled like a psychological character: “das Tun der Darsteller ist – wie die Inszenierung, der es sich verdankt – wesentlich ein Geschehen-lassen” [the performer’s action is essentially a letting-it-happen, like the mise-en-scène that brings it about] (Seel cit. in Roselt 2008: 51). Nübling’s understanding of realism established a strong parallel to the emergence of transformational process already discussed in relation to *Crave*:

Der realistische Gehalt stellt sich über was anderes her, das Suchen danach, was ist jetzt sozusagen die räumliche Situation oder die körperliche Situation, [...] die hat ja mehr oder weniger nichts mit der Abbildung zu tun sondern mit einer Art von Transformation.

[The realistic aspect is created through something else, a search for the spatial situation or the corporeal situation, [...] which has nothing to do with illustration but with a kind of transformation] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d).

In this, we can see a realisation of Frei's description of the diversity of representational strategies in new realism. Constant transformation "erschüttert ein Verständnis von Wirklichkeit selbst, nämlich in der Form, wie sie im Drama abgebildet wird" [destabilises an understanding of reality itself, namely in the form in which it is represented in drama] (Frei 2006: 27-28).

With a similar interest in transformations, rehearsals for *Crave* also investigated a parallel existence between actor and figure. Many of the common exercises used in rehearsals in Great Britain are no longer effective in this context. Alan Williams described how in the original production of *Crave*, director Vicky Featherstone did some of these exercises with them in the full knowledge that they would not work (Williams cit. in: Peters 2012a). A transformation and adaptation of existing exercises is one possible way out of this dilemma. One of the first exercises, called 'If you've ever...' demonstrated this. In this exercise, the actors had to react to such propositions as 'If you've ever had your heart broken, stand up'. Everyone who stood up then had to look for a new chair, while the person in the middle who had proposed the category also tried to sit down. The exercise integrated questions about background, emotions, and personal secrets into a game structure. It is usually played as a

way to investigate character; the actors would react to the questions according to what they know about their character background or feel appropriate for it. Given the non-existence of coherent characters in *Crave*, Gray and the actors played this game answering as themselves and using it as a quick and playful way of getting to know each other. In a second step, the director suggested that they relate their reactions to the overall themes of the play. It was then discussed whether answering from the point of view of the play had to be exclusive or could be combined with personal answers. Finally, they decided to play the game in this mixed version, thereby starting to experiment with a fusion of their own selves with that of the various figures to whom they give voice. As Morison described it, the final version of this game encapsulated the nature of their performance since “that’s what the characters are, it’s you but with Sarah Kane’s words” (Morison cit. in: Peters 2012e).

I have already discussed another exercise, by Declan Donnellan (‘There’s you, there’s me, and we are in the space’) which also worked against the creation of character and instead highlighted the performer’s presence on stage. Liske, whose Russian training is strongly influenced by Stanislavskian notions of character, visibly struggled with the game and voiced his frustration about the lack of objectives (cp. Liske cit. in: Peters 2012a). Crotty recognised that their performance became “as much about who’s in the play as [about] the text itself” (Crotty cit. in: Peters 2012b), and Tarlton described their presence on stage as a “vessel for this play to be heard” (Tarlton cit. in: Peters 2012f). This reduction of acting in the sense of creating character was also corroborated by Kane’s own performance as recounted by Alan Williams. She read C for the performance in Maastricht and Copenhagen since the original actress could not make these dates. Williams described how “she was just saying the lines”

whereas the other actors – himself included – “were all acting it a bit and when she did it she was literally just saying it and even though it she wasn’t acting it, it was very very powerful” (Williams cit. in: Peters 2012a). Of course, given her strong personal relationship with the text, this emphasis of Kane’s performative presence was especially effective. The production of *Crave* was therefore carefully balanced between a demonstrating performative gestus opening up metaphoric potentialities, and sudden and repeated glimpses of figures with a metonymical actuality. Gray commented on the fact that “characters will just naturally arrive because audiences see an actor speaking and they create character” (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c). He located the creation of character in an interaction between audience and actor, and not solely within the actor himself. Like Nübling, Gray was interested in the parallel existence of actor and figure, and described how such a *mixture* can be thwarted by cultural tendencies in acting:

With British actors I get frustrated because they want to know what their character is, they want to play naturalism [...] and it’s so fucking irritating to just get them to be in the space they’re in and not imagine they are somewhere else and to act with things around them – they find it very hard. And then equally with German actors, I find it hard [that they cannot] imagine there’s an offstage – they can’t really do that, that there’s somebody knocking on the door offstage – they can’t create that sense.” (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c)

The combination of these two skills points the way for a desirable hybrid between dramatic and theatrical realist styles. We can find a possible way of creating such a hybrid in Brecht’s rehearsal practice. He was able to reactivate Stanislavsky’s exercises for an approach that emphasises the performer’s

presence by turning them into one step in the development of the relationship between role and performer. Roselt summarises Brecht's position: "Selbst die Einfühlung [...] wird so eine mögliche Methode der Rollenarbeit im Probenprozeß; durch sie können Schauspieler kennenlernen, was sie zu verfremden haben" [even empathy [...] thus becomes a possible method to work on a role during the rehearsal process; through it, the actors can learn what they have to defamiliarise] (Roselt 2005: 276). From this perspective, the British actors' stronger investment in the creation of a consistent character does not have to run in opposition to a theatrical realist approach that emphasises the performer's presence, but instead can be part of the development of this presence. I will further investigate this interconnection between the methodologies of dramatic realism and theatrical realism in chapter 4 when looking at my own practice.

Character-subtext and gestus-subtext

In productions like *Crave* and *Three Kingdoms*, interiority could not be expressed indirectly through subtext since it was directly expressed in the text: "there is no interiority because it is all interior" (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c). With the deconstruction of the notion of a coherent character and the emergence of the performative aspect of the figure on stage, we also have to reconsider the nature and function of subtext. In order to create the character of dramatic realism, defined as it is by its wholeness (which does not exclude internal contradictions that remain unresolved), the actor needs to construct a subtext underlying and motivating his actions. The actors try to construct everything that "lies beneath and around the text [...]: character, context, intention, background

and situation” (Houseman 2008: 153) in as much detail as possible. The British actors of *Three Kingdoms* took this concept of subtext as their starting point. Nübling remembered how Simonian once said “I wish Simon [Stephens] were here [...] to explain me my character” (Simonian cit. by Nübling in the original English in: Peters 2011d). This need for explanation highlighted the actors’ desire for a psychologically coherent subtext driving their character. The next step was the sublimation of this subtext. The British actors saw subtext in “the absence of event or the absence of happening or the absence of occurring” (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e). This understanding of subtext also underpinned the rehearsals for *Crave* – at least for many of the actors. Liske in particular had been trained in the sublimation of subtext in Russia: “It’s no mistake that Russia is considered the centre of psychological theatre. In Russian theatre everything happens in the pauses [...] not in the text” (Liske cit. in: Peters 2012d). He felt that British acting already moves away from this to an extent because they “give their action on the line, they do it as they talk about it” (ibid). One way of creating an “illustrierte Untertext” [illustrated subtext] underlying and surrounding the words is through actioning the text (Stanislavski cit. in: Stegemann 2007: 151). In this exercise, you describe each line by an active transitive verb that defines the intention of your character underpinning the sentence, for example ‘to console’ or ‘to threaten’.⁴⁰ Crotty actioned all of her lines as homework because she felt that “as an actor, we need to have a very strong sense of what we are doing” (Crotty cit. in: Peters 2012b). Tarlton also usually actions his text, but at the same time cautioned against the danger of doing it on your own – you can easily construct a scene in your head that does not correspond to the way it will actually develop on stage (cp. Tarlton cit. in:

⁴⁰ I will investigate the practical use of actioning further in chapter 4.

Peters 2012f). Improvisations and variations then take place within the framework of these “certainties” and it is the actors’ task “to find objectives that are flexible enough to allow you to play” (Crotty cit. in: Peters 2012b). These individual objectives of the subtext were further supported by the actors’ work on the character’s background in this production. Morison described how this work on the given circumstances formed part of her recently completed training at Guildhall School of Music and Drama: “When you’re given a character, you’re trying to do everything in their background from when they were born up to the point where they’re now in the play” (Morison cit. in: Peters 2012e). However, she also felt that “you can’t do that for this play because there’s nothing about the characters” (ibid). Even though the actors still worked with character-based subtext in the rehearsals for *Crave*, all of them realised the shortcomings of this approach to this kind of text where a lot of the subtext is already brutally laid open by the words themselves.

Gray was therefore not very interested in this type of subtext, feeling that it “can clog up the rhythm” (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c). Instead, he wanted to explore what I would define as a different kind of subtext, the subtext of a specific gestus in which the performer’s attitude to the figure and the act of creation is revealed. We have encountered this more metaphorical gestus in my analysis of metaphorical gestures in chapter 1. Gray observed that “it’s much more naked and more difficult to just stay on the line and play only the line. Actors just love to hang around in the subtext and do stuff underneath. It’s a real security space” (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c). Instead, the director emphasised the importance of physicality in the transition between actor and figure. Nübling was also much more interested in the visualisation and physicalisation of what is usually sublimated in the subtext, for example in the

figure of the Trickster. Stephens contrasted this with Katie Mitchell's approach: "If she had been doing that [*Three Kingdoms*], the Trickster would have been realised absolutely in the subtext of what the characters are doing to each other on stage" (Stephens cit. in: Peters 2011h). It is because Nübling was not pursuing such a notion of subtext that Roberts conjectured on the basis of this encounter with a German director that subtext is "something the British get and the Germans don't" (Roberts cit. in: Peters 2011e). Gray had similar feelings with regard to actioning, which he used when rehearsing *Motortown* in Hamburg: "I don't think they really understand it in Germany" (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c).

However, what was at stake is again a *different* understanding of subtext and the status of the actor's presence instead of a *lack* of understanding. This different understanding is closely aligned to the different approaches to and aims of improvisations I have discussed earlier on. Both *Crave* and *Three Kingdoms* included passages of narration which directly verbalised what would have been present as subtextual thoughts and emotions in a play of dramatic realism. In *Three Kingdoms*, for example, the German policeman Steffen Dresner, who initially seemed to help Stone and Lee in their investigation but turns increasingly sinister as the play progresses, had the following speech shortly after their arrival in Estonia: "Iggy. I have driven for 18 hours to get you here. Man, I'm exhausted. Don't leave me hanging here. Hit him [the Estonian criminal Andres Rebane, whom they have finally tracked down]" (Stephens 2011b: 78). In rehearsals, Nübling said that "das sind eigentlich Subtexte oder Regietexte" [it is actually subtext or stage directions] (cit. in: Peters 2011a). In order to activate these texts in performance, "da muss man mal einen anderen Text erfinden" [you have to invent a different text] lying underneath it (ibid). This

different subtext is the gestus-subtext, which is separated from the character subtext and explored as an expressive path of its own. Compare Pavis' analysis of the gestus and its role vis-à-vis the act of performance (the showing):

So instead of fusing logos and gestuality in an illusion of reality, the Gestus radically cleaves the performance into two blocks: the shown (the said) and the showing (the saying). Discourse no longer has the form of a homogenous block; it threatens at any moment to break away from its enunciator. (Pavis 1984: 298).

Nübling explored this aspect of showing “from the outside in rather than the inside out. [...] What is happening on stage [...] is what we take inside to create how our character feels” (Simonian cit. in: Peters 2011i). Teke commented on the importance of remaining aware of yourself as a performer for the creation of this kind of subtext: “Es ist nicht so, beim Schauspielen, dass man irgendwo hinreichen muss [...], sondern man muss da bleiben wo man ist und sich öffnen” [I don't think that you need to get somewhere else when acting [...]; you need to stay where you are and open yourself up] (Teke cit. in: Peters 2011g). The subtext of the performer was a crucial element in the creation of atmosphere. Instead of investigating Tommy's background realistically for the construction of the interrogation scene at the beginning, Nübling suggested that Simonian should play the part as if he had waited for five hours. This idea of waiting was not so much rooted in Tommy's situation within the world of the play, but an attempt to formulate an attitude for the performer towards his role. If we allow for this different understanding of what subtext can be, we realise its importance for Nübling, *pace* Roberts and Gray. Accordingly, Nübling stated that for him “das ist der wichtige Text, der Subtext. Den Rest hör ich ja. [...] Das was mir der Schauspieler mitliefert [...] als Mehrwert, das ist das entscheidend.”

[this is the important text, the subtext. The rest I can hear anyway. [...]] The vital thing is to find the surplus communicated by the actor] (Nübling cit. in: Peters 2011d). I will return to the issue of character-subtext and gestus-subtext in the next chapter, where I will submit it to a practical investigation.

After the observation: outlook and reception

In spite of their different cultural backgrounds, rehearsals for *Three Kingdoms* and *Crave* had much in common. There is no hard and fast dividing line between the rehearsal methodologies of dramatic realism and of theatrical realism, since they form part of a fluid continuum of representation. Partly motivated by the text, both Gray and Nübling distanced themselves from psychological realism in their methodologies and sought to explore the theatrical potential of performance on stage. The negotiation of the performer's presence alongside any traces of a fictional figure was central to the construction of worlds in both productions. Where cultural differences emerged, they created problems only when not discussed and considered sufficiently. Communication was blocked when German and British theatre practitioners understood different things under the same term, for example 'improvisation' or 'subtext'. My analysis of improvisation suggests that effective hybrids between the two approaches can be created if director and actors are clear about the aims and methods, and willing to spend time on exercises which allow them to transition from one mode of improvisation to the other. Frost and Yarrow emphasis that

balance between 'reality of self' and 'reality of role' is an important basis
either for mainstream acting or for more exploratory and ultimately extra-

theatrical work. The essentials of improvisation underpin both strands, and it is only the difference of focus which separates them. (Frost/Yarrow 2007: 38)

In order to organise this sharing of methodologies, improvisations can be separated into pre-rehearsal exercises and rehearsal exercises. “Pre-rehearsal involves the preparation of bodies and groups for *disponibilité* and play, and the exploration of the relationship between the body of the performer and the space of the performance” (ibid: 19). Matzke also mentions the “Erlernen und Erarbeiten von Techniken” [learning and development of techniques] that have to precede improvisation (Matzke 2012: 217).

Pre-rehearsal is the place for this acquisition as part of an intercultural exchange and for the exploration of hybrids between performative and character-based improvisations. The company should start improvisations “in and as rehearsals [...] with reference to the performance-text” (Frost/Yarrow 2007: 19) only once a shared language has been established in pre-rehearsals. Based on this sketch of a tiered approach to intercultural rehearsals, I would contradict Gray’s statement that “unless it’s in your training, in your tradition, it’s not possible to do that” (Gray cit. in: Peters 2012c), to adopt elements of theatrical realism into your performance. *Three Kingdoms* was conceived from the beginning to be an intercultural work willing to explore the potential clash between different theatrical cultures. Scharf observed that “ist ja auch interessant, dass nämlich letztlich diese Schauspiel- und Theatertraditionsgrenze nicht zwischen dem alten und dem neuen osteuropäischen Raum liegt, [...] die liegt ganz klar zwischen England und den andern beiden” [it is interesting that the boundary between acting traditions and theatre traditions does not lie between the old Western and the new Eastern

European space, [...] but very clearly between England and the other two], Germany and Estonia (Scharf cit. in: Peters 2011f). He went on to identify this boundary as situated “im Abstraktionsspiel und in einer bestimmten [...] Körperlichkeit des Spiels und in einem körperlichen Bewusstsein” [in the play with abstraction and a special [...] corporeality of acting and a physical awareness] (ibid). Stephens also contrasted Nübling with the British directors:

What was striking when I first saw his work was that it's very different to British theatre workers; his concern is with the experience of the theatre, is with what's happening physically and viscerally and visually within the room of the theatre auditorium and between the stage and the audience. I think nearly every British theatre director I've worked with has operated from the position that their work is to interrogate the character to such a rigorous level that the actors are equipped with an absolute understanding of who the character is they are playing, [...] as though, rather than making an event for the theatre, they're trying to replicate a life of another human being. (Stephens cit. in: Peters 2011h)

Nonetheless, awareness of theatricality or the “experience of theatre” can and often does go hand in hand with elements lifted from dramatic realism – fragmented and put in a different context maybe, but still present.

The reception of *Three Kingdoms* in Germany and Great Britain showed an acute awareness of this question of the ability of intercultural theatre to create a mixture of theatrical traditions. But where German reviews were mostly favourable (in fact it was voted ‘Best Foreign Play of the Year’ by *Theater heute*), printed reviews in Britain were lukewarm at best, whereas online

reviews were much more enthusiastic.⁴¹ What ensued was a discussion about the future of theatre in Britain that took *Three Kingdoms* as its rallying point. Reviewers in Germany saw it as a “gekonnten Bewältigung der interkulturellen Herausforderung ‘Ensemble-Mix’” [skilful overcoming of the intercultural challenge of ‘ensemble mix’] (Becker 2011). They also congratulated Nübling that “das Experiment aufgegangen ist und ein faszinierendes Theater herauskam, das sich selbstbewusst ‘europäisches Theater’ nennen sollte. Wovon alle reden, Nübeling hat es getan” [the experiment has worked and the result has been fascinating theatre, which should confidently call itself ‘European theatre’. Nübling has done what everybody is talking about] (Banitzki 2011). This last statement already implicitly sees productions like *Three Kingdoms* sketching a model for future theatrical co-productions across Europe. However, the exact nature of this theatrical mix is assessed differently. While one reviewer felt that “man während der Aufführung nicht darüber nachgedacht hat, welcher Schauspieler aus welcher Ecke des Kontinents kommt” [you did not think about which actor came from which corner of the continent during the performance] (Becker 2011), another considered the first scene, where Stone and Lee interrogate Tommy, “bestes englisches Theater” [the finest English theatre] and even goes as far as to claim “[d]ie Überlegenheit des Englischen als Bühnensprache” [the superiority of English as a stage language] (Banitzki 2011). The style of acting is seen on the one hand as a fusion, on the other as an eclectic mix. As we have seen, it was this negotiation of acting styles that

⁴¹ The British and German-language practices of reviewing are naturally part of the wider theatrical systems under discussion. The differences between the reviews that will emerge in my following analysis are rooted in this association with specific theatrical cultures. An investigation of these differences in reviewing practices would be an interesting expansion of the comparison of British and German-language theatrical cultures, but lies beyond the scope of my thesis. Suffice it to say that whereas British reviews tend to be shorter and aimed at giving a recommendation to the reader (as encapsulated in the use of one to five stars to rate a show), German reviews are often longer (especially if printed in monthly magazines such as *Theater heute*) – a practice that is itself only possible due to the repertory system) and as a rule do not include a short-hand rating system.

proved the main difficulty during the rehearsals. The difference in judgement can therefore be taken as an indication that it had not been successfully resolved one way or another even by the time of the performance.

The favourable comments in the German press especially highlighted Nübling's masterful creation of images and energies. The director has "immer wieder kongeniale Bilder gefunden für die schwebende Suspense und märchenhaft böse Mehrdeutigkeit von 'Three Kingdoms'" [repeatedly found congenial images for the hovering suspense and the dark, fairytale-like ambiguity of 'Three Kingdoms'] (Rickfels 2011). The performance is "in geradezu berückender Leichtigkeit [...] choreografiert" [choreographed [...] with a downright entrancing lightness] (ibid) and shows "ungeheure Energie und Spielfreude" [incredible energy and joy of playing] (Franzen 2011). Several reviewers picked out Steven Scharf's 'Rocky Raccoon' song as the prime example of this energy. When Stone and Lee are introduced to their colleague Steffen Dresner at the beginning of the second act in Germany, he starts talking about how he likes the Beatles, assuming he can ingratiate himself with the British detectives. Since Stone in fact dislikes the Beatles, which Dresner cannot understand since he does not speak English, his elaborate praise becomes more and more grotesque, culminating in his singing of the Beatles song 'Rocky Raccoon'. At first it seems as if he is only going to sing the first line, but every time we think he has stopped, he continues, and ends up performing the whole song with relish and abandon, but without any particular musical skill. Scharf's 'Rocky Raccoon' was the result from one of the improvisations and is one of the best examples of the inherent performativity of the German 'Rampensau' in its high energy, its continual hovering on the edge of disintegration, and its self-conscious performativity. It is therefore indicative of

the kind of theatrical style praised in the German reviews. Becker sees in the performance how the character “will sich leutselig ranschmeißen” [affably wants to throw himself] at the two British detectives and comments on how it was “mit Applaus aus dem Publikum belohnt [...]” [rewarded with applause by the audience] (Becker 2011). Küveler also mentions the “Szenenapplaus” [applause for the scene] and underlines the performative element in calling it a “Beatles-Zertrümmerung” [smashing the Beatles to pieces], an expression parallel to the often discussed “smashing the classics to pieces ” (Klassiker-Zertrümmerung) as an agenda of the German directors’ theatre of the 80s (Küveler 2011).

The ‘Rocky Raccoon’ scene was only mentioned in one British review, where it is criticised precisely for those qualities that are praised in the German ones. It was not perceived as an inventive virtuoso performance but as “bizarre” and is listed as an example of the “meandering songs throughout the performance” (Hitchings 2012). It is fair to say that Quentin Letts’ critique of *Three Kingdoms* as “magnificently bad, laughably awful” and as a “pastiche of go-ahead pan-European ‘ground-breaking’ drama” in the *Daily Mail* stands alone in its outright dismissal (Letts 2012). It is not so much a review as an airing of the author’s anti-European sentiments bolstered by a consciously truncated and confusing summary in order to ‘demonstrate’ how confusing the play is. Nonetheless, other critics thought the performance “grossly self-advertising” with too much “geographical diversity but [...] no specific identity” (Billington 2012) and deplore that “the symbolism becomes overwrought” (Hitchings 2012). This distrust of a rich visual language that is not based on the logic of dramatic realism also emerges in the positive assessment of *Crave*, where Colin Bramwell recommends its “liberating [...] lack of artifice” stemming from a “respect for the language” (Bramwell 2012). Hitchings’ review of *Three*

Kingdoms is overall one of the most balanced ones, since he also recognises its “visionary” qualities and its “stunning theatricality” as a “montage of nightmarish images [...] and intriguing textures” (ibid). Indeed, his criticism of the symbolism of *Three Kingdoms* runs parallel to my own earlier problematisation of Nübling’s use of metaphorical gestures. This was also echoed in the less enthusiastic German reviews. Richard Mayr lamented that the staging remains on the level of a “Bilderreigen, der [...] sich nach der Pause auch noch in Beliebigkeit auflöste” [roundel of images that [...] dissolved into arbitrariness after the interval] (Mayr 2011). He locates the reason for this arbitrariness in a production context where “ein Stoff zum Reifen keine Zeit mehr [hat]” [the material has no time to ripen] and where there is an attitude that “der Regisseur wird [es] auf der Bühne schon richten” [the director will fix it on stage] (ibid). Another reviewer singled out the porn scene whose genesis in improvisation I have described above, judging: “Hinter diesen öligen Darstellungen standen kaum mehr als zwei Sätze” [There are no more than two sentences backing up this oily depiction] (Banitzki 2011). The occasional lack of integration of text and gesture was therefore identified in both theatrical cultures.

On the other hand, the British online reviews shared the fascination with imagery and energy which dominated the German critical reception. But whereas this enthusiasm was visible in both online and print media and Germany, and expressed by both older and younger reviewers, the dividing lines in Great Britain were much clearer. Crucially, Maddy Costa wonders if *Three Kingdoms* is “the shape of British theatre to come” (Costa 2012) in her account of how the production split the critics. Referring to an essay by Alex Chisholm, associate literary director at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Costa sees this future not so much in particular performance styles, but in the

overcoming of “the opposition of New Writing vs. New Work and its closely allied cousin Writers’ Theatre vs. Directors’ Theatre” (Chisholm in Costa 2012). Chisholm explicitly refers to the working relationship between Nübling and Stephens as a positive example. The innovative element some British critics saw in *Three Kingdoms* was in the mix of ‘New Writing’ and ‘New Work’, of playtexts that allow and invite an approach through the methodologies of devising and improvisation. From my experience of the rehearsals for *Three Kingdoms* as well as of my own practical projects, I would add that this ‘devising with text’ needs to go hand in hand with the fusion of performative and character-based acting styles. Andrew Haydon analyses perceptively what can be gained by a combination, possibly a montage, of styles:

In the first scene, set in England, the English actors do English acting. The opening scene of police interviewing a young suspect is at once totally familiar and utterly different. [...] It's still perfectly played, and yet the differences somehow make you see it differently; makes you watch it harder from the off. It is suddenly like seeing theatre again, rather than like watching TV done live. (Haydon 2012a)

Haydon here describes an effect of defamiliarisation that allows the audience to see even metonymic gestures and dialogue in a new light. I have discussed a similar effect with regards to the use of metonymic gestures in early rehearsals of *Crave*.

Juxtaposed, the idiosyncrasies of both the British and the German acting style emerge more strongly; each one is newly considered a conscious aesthetic choice instead of an automatic reaction. The critical responses in Germany and Great Britain mirrored the interaction of acting styles I encountered during the rehearsals for *Three Kingdoms*. The British theatrical tradition is by no means

ignorant of a performative style of acting and an approach to directing new writing that treats the text as material for devising. However, these approaches are much less common than in Germany, and still need a greater amount of justification and training, both in execution and reception. What is held up as a possible future for British theatre, a future that has already taken root in some areas and with some practitioners, has been the established (yet still often contested) theatrical language in Germany. Nonetheless, the international production structure of *Three Kingdoms* was pushing boundaries even in Germany: “Denn derart inhaltlich verzahnt sind internationale Koproduktionen – zumindest auf Stadttheaterebene – bislang noch nicht gewesen” [For there has not been an international coproduction whose content was interconnected in such a way – at least at the level of the municipal theatre] (Rakow 2012: 26). The comments of the reviewers from both sides of the Channel also reveal a strong desire for a mixture of dramatic and theatrical realist approaches. Where some British reviewers yearned for the inventiveness and freedom they perceive in the German approach, some German critics expressed a desire for the strengthening of storytelling and characterisation. The results of my rehearsal observations of *Three Kingdoms* and *Crave* suggest an increasing diversification of directing and acting methodologies in both the German-speaking countries and Britain. There is an eclectic mixture of aesthetics and methodologies that deconstructs any remainders of mutually exclusive dichotomies, for example between new writing and new work, directors’ theatre and writers’ theatre, or dramatic realism and theatrical realism. This is especially true we focus our attention more on the processes (for example in rehearsal) than on the final product. Since the playtexts the directors and actors engage with are themselves already hybrids, combining a wide range of forms,

they have already begun to account for this in the diversification of their rehearsal methodologies. In these, practices from a more dramatic realist background, for example the logical construction of a psychologically believable character, can be combined with practices from theatrical realism, for example a demonstrative attitude towards one's character that highlights the presence of the performer. The combination of these methodologies always results in their renegotiation and change. It seems as if it is the negotiation of the performer's presence in each rehearsal in particular that establishes the basic conditions for the specific modification and combination of methodologies. If that is the case, it is the actor's *fusion* of two different skills – that of developing a character and that of integrating his own distanced presence – which emerges as one of the most crucial conditions for this type of hybrid drama.

Conclusion

Overall, my account of directing trends in German-speaking countries and Great Britain has identified a diverse scene where individual directors nonetheless often share certain cultural similarities. Both Nübling and Gray find their place on the directing spectrum of their countries. More interestingly perhaps, we can identify a greater methodological mixture than that allowed by polarizing talk about German director's theatre and British writer's theatre. Nonetheless, different methodologies, especially with regard to the influence of more performative approaches, are still more strictly kept apart in Great Britain when it comes to the directing of new writing. My observation of Nübling's and Gray's rehearsals as well as the reception of *Three Kingdoms* in Germany and Great Britain, and the development of Sean Holmes' directorial language have

demonstrated that a stronger mixture or fusion of the different methodologies is possible. Indeed, it often increases the audience's awareness of each methodology's specificity. An even greater willingness to experiment with different styles of representation and methodological diversity in the actors' and directors' treatment of playtexts across artificial lines of genre such as new writing, new work, or physical theatre, remains desirable. It is in this area that German-language theatre might be able to set an example for future explorations in British theatre. Similarly, British theatre has developed a useful array of methodologies for the investigation of character, which can inform and strengthen aspects of German-language experimentation, where appropriate. Where British theatre has to offer lessons in creating empathy and identification, German-language theatre can show how to balance this with a critical distance that allows us to see the figure on stage as the 'other' – to not fully appropriate it into our own interiority, but accept its simultaneous alterity. My practical investigation in the next chapter will explore some initial ways of integrating British rehearsal methodologies into a larger process of experimentation and montage.

CHAPTER 4: Development of rehearsal methodologies for a hybrid practice

Staging narrative playtexts: *Black Beast Sorrow* (Anja Hilling) and *End and Beginning* (Roland Schimmelpfennig)

This final part of my thesis will develop further the theoretical considerations of chapter 1 and the results of my rehearsal observations in chapter 3 through a practical investigation of how a director might approach narrative texts. At the heart of this chapter lies the exploration of practical exercises and staging devices that specifically address the formal aspects of staging hybrid texts with strong narrative elements. In continuation of my focus in the previous chapter, I am going to investigate how to negotiate fluctuating emphases in the continuum between character and performer, especially with regard to the notion of subtext. Consequently, this chapter concentrates on developing rehearsal strategies to enable the actor to develop and blend a range of acting styles whose formal diversity can match the formal diversity of the texts. I consciously include the dead ends we reached in the rehearsal process in my account in order to demonstrate their importance in the development of a successful strategy for staging narrative texts. They can often reveal more about the specific requirements of theatrical realism than the exercises that worked, since each dead end, each problem on the way introduces a necessary retarding moment that allows for reflection and reconsideration and the constant dialectical interaction of theory and practice. The directorial choices and exercises I propose for staging narrative texts stem from my own practice and necessarily also reflect my own continuing development as a director. As a result, it is important to remain aware that very different staging decisions (for

example more postdramatic ones) are possible that would still continue to engage with the narrative nature of the texts. My specific approach is characterised by my desire to develop a fusion of methodologies from dramatic and theatrical realism, thereby bridging the perceived gap between British and German-language performance practices.

The two projects that serve as the focal point for my exploration of such methodologies are the staging of excerpts from *Black Beast Sorrow* by Anja Hilling and *End and Beginning* by Roland Schimmelpfennig developed with students from the Drama Department of the University of Exeter in 2011 and 2012 respectively. Since we worked from the English versions of the two plays, all references to the texts from now on will be exclusively to the two translations by Philip Thorne (*Black Beast Sorrow*) and by myself (*End and Beginning*). Anja Hilling's play *Black Beast Sorrow* provides a challenging text for a practical examination of the different gestural and verbal ways of expressing a character's interiority through dialogue and narration. The play itself enacts a journey from the dramatic realism of its first part – focusing on the dialogue and interaction between the six friends during a barbecue excursion – to the theatrical realism of the second part, where a catastrophic forest fire results in the fragmentation of the individual subject and consequently to the breakdown of dramatic dialogue. A third part leads to the tentative re-establishing of character and dialogue. However, even the more dialogical first and second parts include a more narrative type of text. Its typography (use of italics) seems to mark it as stage directions, whose function of providing description and background information it fulfils. Yet it is written not from the point of view of an objective third-person narrator, but displays a distinctively subjective voice: its description goes beyond the purely functional and includes impressionistic and

emotional elements: “*The wait makes it [the forest] brighter, louder, lovelier*” (Hilling 2009b: 4). Stage directions are thus infused with a narratorial voice that is later explicitly revealed as that of a first-person narrator: “*I think it’s a bone from one of the chops*” (ibid: 26). In this way, Hilling makes it clear that there is no longer an authoritative voice providing a unified and whole framework in which the plot is situated. Even the seemingly more privileged information on what characters feel and think is revealed to be subjective, to be just one interpretation amongst many. I will take a closer look at these sections and at how their subjectivity can be activated on stage in the following practical investigation, which focused on Part I and the beginning of Part II (The Blaze, The Scream, The Body).

Schimmelpfennig’s *End and Beginning* incorporates much fewer elements of dramatic realism from the outset, as indicated by its subtitle “A Dramatic Poem” (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 1). The play has seven identifiable story lines, held together by the central story of Peter, an unemployed actor. He despairs over his lack of success and his guilt towards his friend Frankie, whom he excluded from a project years ago and who has come back to haunt him after dying in a plane crash in the USA. Together with the story of the “Girl in the Wedding Dress”, who digs her own grave and enters the realm of demons in spite of the nagging protestations of her mother, this story formed the material for our project. The typography of the text does not indicate specific stage directions. Instead, it mixes blocks of text without speech headers with dialogical sections marked by dashes (thus leaving open to which speaker they are attributed) and with clearly attributed dialogues. The playtext includes narrative sections whose functionality would have marked them as stage directions in other, more dramatic plays, such as the indication of pauses. In

contrast to Hilling's narrative stage directions, these sections do not display an individual subjective voice, but remain distanced and more purely descriptive.

Both projects were part of the Term 3 activities offered to the undergraduate drama students at the University of Exeter. Undergraduate students in the Drama Department are not required to take exams during their three years, and are assessed instead on a series of essays and presentations throughout as well as on a final Practical Essay at the end of the third year. As a result, the department needed to reconsider the third term of the academic year, which is traditionally taken up in other departments by the exams and the students' preparation for them. The decision was to not offer additional teaching as it occurs during the first two terms, but to offer the students a range of self-realised activities in which they can "further [their] theoretical and practical studies without the pressure of being marked", "invest into their employability and career prospects (e.g. work placements, career workshops etc)", and "engage in work across all levels: from Level 1 to PG" as Jane Milling, Jon Primrose and David Roesner explained in an email to the department (Milling, Primrose, Roesner 2009: 1). The decision to work with students within the framework of an educational institution will present limitations as well as opportunities for my investigation. None of the students had received professional training as actors. On the one hand, the resulting lack of advanced acting skills limited my ability to explore certain areas of the staging of narrative texts. We will encounter these limits, for example the improvisational dead ends during the rehearsals for *End and Beginning*. On the other hand, the lack of formal training also often resulted in a greater openness for different rehearsal methodologies. Possible cultural influences of actor training in Britain therefore had less of an impact on our work. In terms of the institutional framework,

rehearsals were often restricted by the limited availability of the students. All of them were so busy with other productions during Term 3 that concentrated work over a longer period of time was largely impossible. However, the University context also allowed us to work free from commercial considerations, since we could access rehearsal and performance space as well as costumes, props and lighting for free. This allowed me to explore a larger range of objects in both *Black Beast Sorrow* and *End and Beginning* than would have been possible in a self-funded fringe production of these plays.

For *Black Beast Sorrow*, I rehearsed the sections in question over eleven days together with seven female students in their first and second year (Freya Millward, Alice Higginson, Kirsty Proffitt, Rose Blyth, Ella-May Hooper, Bethany Horrell, and Sian Keen). This culminated in a final work-in-progress presentation. All of the participants were British (in the case of Rose Blyth with an additional influence from Belgium, where she had grown up), and all of them initially expressed a mixture of bafflement and intrigue after reading the text, even though some of them (Millward and Hooper) had previous experience in working on non-dialogical and postdramatic texts in Effrosyni Mastrokalou's staging of Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine*. In *End and Beginning*, I also worked for eleven days with a smaller group consisting of two British undergraduates, Camilla Borges (First Year) and Laura-Jane Brown (Second Year), and Conor O'Grady (Postgraduate) from Ireland. Similar to Millward and Hooper in the first project, O'Grady had worked with Mastrokalou on postdramatic texts. Brown had some previous experience through my extra-curricular staged readings of Loher's *Adam Ghost* and Jelinek's *Rechnitz*.

COMPOSITION

In my directorial approach to the text, I focused in particular on the contrast between dialogue and narration in their exploration of the characters' interiority. For the purposes of this chapter, I distinguish between two main fields in the director's approach to the staging of narration (and to the staging of theatrical realist texts), namely the director's preparational work and scenic composition (for example, the assignment of voices, decision on chorus section and the approach to them) that Stafford-Clark dismissively called "concept", and his work with the actors on its implementation.⁴² I will start with a discussion of how my composition of the performance, both on my own in preparation of the rehearsals and in the development and change of this first outline through the work with the actors throughout the rehearsals, influenced my conceptualisation of narration on stage.

Narrated stage directions

In *Black Beast Sorrow*, my first compositional decision was to have all stage directions of Part I narrated. This was mainly motivated by their aforementioned distinctively subject voice, which suggested an individualised narrator. Given the presence of a seventh performer in addition to the six characters listed by the playtext, I decided to introduce such a dedicated narrator who would be responsible for the main part of the stage directions. As we will see, other characters also narrated specific sections of the stage directions, but the narrator (performed by Millward) was the main commentating presence. During

⁴² I am obliged to Effrosyni Mastrokalou for this distinction. Her research similarly focuses on directorial approaches to postdramatic theatre, in particular the texts of Heiner Müller. Her experiences were therefore invaluable as a source of comparison and inspiration.

rehearsals, it occurred to me that this role could also have been taken on by the character of Flynn: as Jennifer's new boyfriend and one of the youngest participants in the excursion, he is the outsider of the group. His observing, taciturn behaviour in relation to the *dialogue* would make him into an intriguing exponent of *narratorial* commentary. However, since we had a seventh actor specifically for the narrator, we did not explore this possibility in our staging of *Black Beast Sorrow*. The result of the decision to attribute these texts to specific *characters* – be they a narrator or one of the characters of the play – is their further individualisation. While Hilling's texts maintains a balance between their descriptive function and typographical demarcation as stage directions on the one hand and their subjective tone on the other, my directorial decision to allocate them to characters resulted in a further decrease of their element of distance and consequently also of the presence of the performer behind the character. I opted for this personal attribution in order to explore narration as a way to explore character and to find out in how far the presence of a performer can be developed from within such a character-based approach. A more postdramatic production could have opted for a deindividualised delivery, for example through a chorus or through audio recordings.

Unlike the printed text of Hilling's play in which stage directions are differentiated from spoken text through the use of italics, the layout of *End and Beginning* does not distinguish between different types of text. For some dialogue exchanges, individual utterances are prefaced by a dash, but even this typographic principle is not extended to all dialogue lines. Otherwise, the boundary between narration and stage direction is fluid: everything that could be interpreted as a stage direction, for example the long description of Peter's flat ("Empty and half-filled bottles, water bottles, beer bottles, wine bottles,

cigarette butts swimming in some of them [...]”, Schimmelpfennig 2012: 1) and even comments on rhythm (“Short pause”, *ibid*: 3) are treated as material for narration, as we have seen already in Gosch’s staging of *Vorher/Nachher* by the same playwright (cf. chapter 1). The integration of stage direction into the spoken text that was part of my *directorial* decision for *Black Beast Sorrow* is in *End and Beginning* therefore already much more part of the text, a condition or challenge set by the writer for the director. Nonetheless, their allocation to the characters is not necessarily suggested by the text. The result of such an allocation is different to that of *Black Beast Sorrow* due to the greater presence of a distanced and seemingly objective tone in these passages. Whereas in *Black Beast Sorrow*, the decision to have characters speak these narrative lines increased the impression of a subjective construction of very personal worlds, in *End and Beginning* it led to a juxtaposition of an inside and an outside perspective on the characters. As with *Black Beast Sorrow*, other solutions for the staging of narration in *End and Beginning* could have been found, for example those that do not seek to establish a link between the distanced narrative passages and the characters. Again, my aim in connecting the two was to explore a combined use of dramatic realist and theatrical realist rehearsal methodologies.

The allocation of the lines to the characters – a task only necessary in Act II of *Black Beast Sorrow* – was a decision that I had to make for the whole text of *End and Beginning*. The dialogue lines in particular very clearly suggested a specific allocation. For example, the following line stands out from the narrative context as an apology clearly addressed to Frankie:

I'm sorry, my boy, I'm sorry, if I wasn't, back then, if you had stayed at home back then – if I had, back then – then today you wouldn't be – I'm sorry. (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 2)

Consequently, this line is more sensibly attributed to Peter. Only a very elaborate explanation could justify Frankie speaking it. I experimented with working against this, for example by giving Peter (O'Grady) instead of Frankie (Borges) the question "What I've always wanted to ask you: deep in your hair, inside your hairs, what was there, what was it like, what did you see, and how did you find out?" (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 17). This refers back to an earlier story told by Peter, about a trip to a lake in New Mexico with a girl into whose hair he crept in order to discover the source of "abrightly shining dot in her curls" (ibid: 10). Since the question in the later scene is addressed to whoever told the story, it should be Frankie who asks Peter. We discovered that the logic underlying this line was so strong that working against it only resulted in a lack of clarity. The line did not gain new meaning if given to Peter; instead, it lost the meaning it has as Frankie's question: his fascination with Peter's story, his urge to know, his lack of experience with women in comparison to Peter, who has slept with "maybe two or three hundred" women (ibid: 10). This demonstrated the necessity to clarify speaker and addressee in relation to the coherence of the overarching story if one chooses to attribute the lines to specific characters. Schimmelpfennig does not indicate such an allocation and thus opens up a different interpretation of this passage, one in which the question is not a personal one specific to just one character but has a more general nature. It could be a question we as audience address to the characters or even to the play itself.

With regard to the story of the Girl in the Wedding Dress and her Mother, I decided to give both the Girl's and the Mother's utterances to the actress of the Girl (Brown). This was partly due to circumstantial reasons (the actress playing the Mother dropped out before the start of rehearsals) but even more so due to my desire to experiment more with the challenge of how one actress can represent two different characters. I will discuss the result of this 'ventriloquised' version of the mother in the later section on voice and musicalised language. Unlike *Black Beast Sorrow*, our production of *End and Beginning* did not have a dedicated narrator. Consequently the characters took on an even larger narratorial function than the ones in *Black Beast Sorrow*.

The narrator as psychopomp between fictional world and audience

We decided on an in-the-round staging for *Black Beast Sorrow* to increase the opportunity for direct communication with the audience. The narrator spoke from a fixed place in one of the four corners, using a microphone. Initially, she appeared to be an external focalizer adopting a heterodiegetic position vis-à-vis the represented reality on stage: not being part of either the world of the play or of the audience, the narrator was the mediator and go-between. Her external focalization gave the action on stage meaning and context; in our staging it might even have been seen as bringing these actions into being. When the performers first entered the stage, they had not yet taken on the play's characters. They delivered the play's epigram taken from the Homeric Hymns *unisono*, as a unified, more or less unindividualised chorus, and then collapsed on the floor. When they woke up to the sounds of the narrator speaking the first stage directions, it was as if they are newly born as single, separate beings.

They discovered the world the narrator evokes and in that, discovered their character's individuality. The process of stepping into the play's specific and named roles was shown as a gradual exploration, like the trying on of a garment. We consciously displayed how the performers entered into a relationship with the characters through a position of distance. Since the casting for *Black Beast Sorrow* was not gender-specific (male and female parts were performed by women), even the characters' sex and physicality had to be discovered. The costumes helped with this basic distinction between male and female (with the female parts wearing skirts), but otherwise their uniform black colouring consciously did not individualise the characters. Moreover, the costumes' vaguely Edwardian style introduced an archaic note at odds with the play's scenario of a contemporary barbecue excursion. As can be seen, the six characters were visually presented as neutral in order to be open to inscription and characterisation through language.

We took a contrasting approach in *End and Beginning*. Since narration was exclusively executed by the characters, it was consistently homodiegetic in relation to the world on stage. Focalization moved fluidly between an internal and an external view on the self and the surroundings. Overall, the characters were much more specifically situated in the world of the play, for example through their costume. Frankie (Borges), the Burnt Friend, wore a pilot's jacket and hat in order to make her more masculine and to create a strong visual reminder of her death in a plane crash. This was reinforced by the bandages that wrap her upper body underneath the jacket. Peter's garish red Hawaiian shirt underlined his social ineptitude and thus became the metaphor for his failure as an actor. And the Girl in the Wedding Dress is defined by her costume even in the name she bears: she literally went out to marry death. This

specificity of costume and the overall homodiegetic nature of narration meant that characters were not so much created through language as they were modified by it. Their narrative description of themselves and their situations could work with or against the costumes they wear. This modification of their character could result in a transformation similar to the one described for *Black Beast Sorrow*. When Frankie told the audience how Peter met his half-sister Isabel, Borges took off her hat, exposed her long hair, and *became* Isabel. As a result, her remark “if you look closely, you will see the similarity” (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 6) focused on herself, thereby turning it into an ironic commentary on the difference between Borges as actress and O’Grady as actor – a difference only emphasised by the transformation that has happened seconds earlier. However, in contrast to the example for *Black Beast Sorrow* above, this transformation always originated in the world of the play and was therefore homodiegetic. The characters themselves remained firmly at the heart of all the worlds created on stage. I will explore further how narratorial comments voiced by the characters can modify how we perceive them in the following section on self-narration.

But let us return to the moment of transformation as brought about by a seemingly heterodiegetic narrator in *Black Beast Sorrow*. While Millward’s narration established the scene (“A forest, a mixed forest”, Hilling 2009b: 4), the audience witnessed the process of how the performers took on their roles; the moment of identification occurred when the narrator stated, “*In the front, in front of the clanging of objects, in three consecutive rows, six, no seven people. Four men, two women, on the younger woman’s lap a child, a baby, a girl*” (ibid: 4). The performers entered a situation that clearly related to the story we were told. Horrell, playing the character of Miranda, created her baby Gloria by cradling a

scarf, and gestured to the narrator to correct her counting: “*six, no seven people*” (ibid: 4). All of them sat down on the floor, as if in a bus, and began their journey through the forest. Instead of presenting a fixed, stable, prescriptive relationship between narration and the stage, we witnessed the two elements in active exchange: the narration modified the world and was in turn modified by it. At this point, a binary distinction between the narrator as an external, heterodiegetic focalizer and the world of the play began to break down even for a narrator that was clearly separated from the characters. If the narrator reacted to what happens on stage and communicated with the characters, she became part of the *performance* even if she stayed more or less apart from the fictional world per se. As a consequence, she transformed from a pure function into a psychopomp figure, a traveller between two worlds assuming different functions (either more external or more internal, more homodiegetic or heterodiegetic, according to what was needed at a specific moment). The narrator gained a life on her own that was a parallel to how we as an audience interacted with the performance, inserting ourselves into the world and the characters’ minds, or taking a more distanced perspective from outside.

Subtext and the characters’ self-narration

Narration, however, is not the exclusive territory of the narrator in either of the texts. The stage directions in *Black Beast Sorrow* fall into two broad categories: characterisation and scenic description. The same is true for the narrative texts in *End and Beginning*, where the characterisations provide visual or psychological information about the characters and their relationships: “*You could say they are friends. They know each other, more or less, like each other,*

in a way, sometimes despise each other, know a fair bit about each other, want to get along" (Hilling 2009b: 7). Or in an example from *End and Beginning*:

Half-brother and half-sister, they have known each other since they were twenty years old, grew up apart, they have different mothers, share the father, and since they met, they cling to each other, half and half, and fall off each other, half a lifetime, if you look closely, you will see the similarity. (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 6)

In *Black Beast Sorrow*, these characterisations often offer an interpretation of the character and his or her inner life through the narrator, and thus from an external focalization that is seemingly objective because it is outside the direct interaction and behaviour of the characters. This impression was reinforced by the narrator's physical separateness from the world on stage. Scenic descriptions conjured up the setting and mostly focus on its sensory quality: "*We listen to the crinkle of the foil, the sounds of the forest, a bird of the night, beetles in the dark, a weasel in the foliage, a branch which catches fire on a cigarette butt next to Miranda*" (Hilling 2009b: 26). While in our production of Hilling's play it was the narrator who is mainly responsible for the scenic descriptions⁴³, rehearsals quickly showed how the allocation of some character descriptions to the characters themselves could increase the audience's insight both into the performers' construction of their interiority and into how the characters conceptualise their relationship to others. Miranda (Horrell), Paul (Hooper), Martin (Higginson), Jennifer (Proffitt), Oskar (Blyth), and Flynn (Keen) thus commented both on themselves and on others. This was also the case in our production of *End and Beginning*, where there was no separate narratorial figure, and the characters took over both scenic descriptions and narratorial

⁴³ With the exception of the description of the food and objects brought to the barbecue, which we split up between the characters (cf. Hilling 2009b: 4).

insights into each other's psyche. As commentary, these descriptions strove towards objectivity, but since they were voiced by a specific character, their objectivity was constantly re-subjectivised. Consequently, my specific directorial decision to have characterisations voiced by the characters closely linked them to the characters' interiority. In what they revealed about relationships and self-reflexions, they enabled us to hear the characters' secret thoughts; what they would never tell each other was confessed to the audience. In allocating the line "*Jennifer is not his wife, she used to be*" (Hilling 2009b: 7) to Miranda, it became an expression of her rivalry with her boyfriend's ex-wife – a rivalry only latent in their verbal interaction but becoming visible and audible in our production through the way she physically confronted Jennifer, her voice taking on a condescending tone. Again, this boundary between secret and public thoughts was much more permeable in *End and Beginning*. Since Frankie was dead, Peter could treat him as a ghost. His burnt friend was someone only visible to him, someone with whom he could share all the doubts and regrets that he could not voice while Frankie was alive. The function of the psychopomp, travelling between the worlds of the audience and of the stage, a function taken on by the narrator in *Black Beast Sorrow*, was therefore transferred to the character of Frankie in *End and Beginning*. As a Janus-faced figure, looking into the realm of the dead and of the living, Frankie provoked both narration and dialogue. He could be the active dialogue partner of dramatic realism. However, he could also step out of this role and become omniscient narrator on the one hand, and addressee on the other. As the narrator, Frankie told Peter's and his own story; as the addressee, he helped Peter through his presence as confidante to become the narrator of his own (i.e. Peter's) self. Consequently, Frankie became an important catalyst of Peter's internal explorations and his

journey towards a new beginning. For the Girl in the Wedding Dress, the passage into death was like a rite of initiation into the role of the psychopomp. Her function had shed most dialogic traces and was predominantly narration; even the last vestiges of dialogue between herself and the mother were partly subsumed into her monological narration by the fact that she was impersonating both herself and her mother:

GIRL: And now she, Henrike, 15 years, virgin, is wearing her grandmother's old wedding dress, which has been hanging in the back of the old wardrobe for seventy-five years, moth-eaten, a greyish-yellow rather than white

(AS MOTHER): how you look, you give me a fright, her mother says.

GIRL: If I have to die a virgin, dear mother,

then I will marry Death. (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 3)

Even more radically than Frankie, the Girl in the Wedding Dress saw herself from the outside with the distance of an omniscient narrator.

As we could see in both plays, narration by the characters can be interpreted as subtext that has become verbalised. I have already considered subtext in relation to Nübling's and Gray's rehearsals, and will now enter into a closer investigation of its practical implications for rehearsal methodologies. Subtext is generally defined as "what the characters are consciously trying to do to each other" (Rockas 1976: 42) or "what lies beneath and around the text [...]: character, context, intention, background and situation" (Houseman 2008: 153). It is the character's motivation giving rise to and inscribing itself in the dialogue, but also, and often more tellingly, in the non-verbal parts of performance. All these definitions are grounded on the Stanislavskian approach of psychological

realism (or what I have defined as 'dramatic realism'), in which the "illustrierte Untertext" [illustrated subtext] (Stanislawski cit. in: Stegemann 2007: 151) is created by linking motivations (the so-called 'objectives' and 'through-lines') with illustrating gestures or facial expressions: "jede physische Aufgabe [kann man] psychologisch unterbauen" [every physical task can be substantiated psychologically] (ibid: 68). In the prefix 'sub', the word 'subtext' itself demonstrates how its meaning is seen as something hidden. In performances of dramatic realism, it is the audience's task to penetrate to this layer of hidden meanings by decoding its surface signs encoded in dialogue and gestures (also in the case of a contradiction between the two). The relationship between text and performance on the one hand, and subtext and the character's interior emotions on the other is one of logical (if often complex) inference.

In this context, the way the texts of theatrical realism turn subtext into text seems paradoxical, an oxymoronic attempt with no performative value. Interiority would be revealed in a very superficial way by simply stating it. When the narrator in *Black Beast Sorrow* tells us that the six friends "*sometimes despise each other*" (Hilling 2009b: 7), the verbal explicitness seems to exhaust the potential for the actors to communicate this scorn through their behaviour. Gestural language seems to be doomed to duplicate or illustrate what has already been said. However, the two-way relationship between dialogue and character-subtext of dramatic realism is in fact turned into a more complex and flexible three-way interaction in theatrical realism. This triad consists of dialogue, verbal (narrated) character-subtext and thirdly of a non-verbal (performed) gestus-subtext (cp. also the corresponding section in chapter 3). This gestus-subtext is not a duplication of the character-subtext, but is located outside the fictional worlds on stage. It is more strongly aligned with the act of

creating these worlds, and characterises the actor and his/her attitude towards the character and the theatrical situation as a whole. Carriad Asman highlights this

capacity of the gestus not only to initiate and represent action, but also to draw attention to it by interrupting and retarding it. It is the dual capacity of the gestus both to produce and to represent action. (Asman 1994: 51).

Hence, gestus-subtext shows a corresponding capacity of drawing attention to the creation of subtext whilst simultaneously producing it. Character-subtext is provided verbally, while the non-verbal gestus-subtext interrupts (if we follow Benjamin's terminology). Even if my understanding of gestus in the use of gestus-subtext is more individualistic than Brecht's, they coincide in the crucial understanding that they want to avoid "expression and illustration in the sense that these are motivated by a sovereign human psyche" (Fowler 1991: 29).

In the previous example from *Black Beast Sorrow*, the gestus-subtext allows the actors to express their attitude towards the scorn stated by the narrator. They can accept it, qualify it, reject it, or transform it. The texts at hand exemplify this combination of a Brechtian with a Stanislavskian approach to subtext. The narrated subtext allows the audience to reflect upon the character's motivations and provides access to one layer of emotions; in the example above from *Black Beast Sorrow*, this was evident in the way Miranda's behaviour was driven by her rivalry with Jennifer. In addition though, the performer provided us with an added level of meaning through the way she expressed the words of the narrated subtext in her delivery and accompanying embodiment. A useful illustration was the moment in *End and Beginning* where

Peter reflected on his failure as an actor and the question of whether to retrain for another job or not:

if you do that, there will be no way back, no return, never again, no one has ever been able to do that, then you failed like you predicted to everyone else except yourself, not to yourself, you didn't image how hard it would be, how hard it is, if you don't get any further, if nothing, nothing, nothing happens anymore, getting through that, that's the difference, some get through that, others don't, I don't, I don't, I don't, it's like that until dawn (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 4).

Stylistically, the repetitions and corrections clearly mark this text as internal stream-of-consciousness: a classic example of verbalised subtext. Peter's insecurities were put into words, and the text itself enacted his wavering between different positions. In our staging of this section, Frankie (Borges) bent over until her upper body was horizontal. Peter (O'Grady) then lay down on her, face facing towards the audience, feet lifted from the floor and stretched towards the back of the stage, arms spread wide. It seemed as if he was flying, and this flying added another layer of meaning to the verbalised subtext of his vacillation. It encapsulated the precarious position, his fear of 'failing/falling', of making the wrong decision and thus turned into a gestus of fear. Yet at the same time, it also transported the feeling of exhilaration that this 'moment before the jump', this moment before an important decision had for the character. Moreover, Peter's and Frankie's combined image communicated their closeness (Frankie supports Peter, who trusts him), but in an indirect way (they do not face each other, and the physical strain works against any impression of tenderness). The physical subtext was here not merely supporting verbal statements, but opened up new and metaphoric levels of meaning by

introducing an element of distance that allowed us to reflect “on what might have been acted on stage.” (Pavis on gestus, cit. the original English in: Haas 2006: 242). I will later discuss the ways in which the relationship between the narration of the character-subtext and the gestures of the gestus-subtext create a multitude of potentialities.

The realisation that narration can have its own subtext in the attitude the actor adopts towards it opens up new possibilities for actors, since until now it was often assumed that narration on stage is purely focused on the communication of information and therefore an impediment for characterisation and acting rather than a boon. Leo Rockas, for example, differentiates between “dramatic subtext” and “the subtext of stories”, and claims there is a qualitative difference between them, with dramatic subtext defined as essentially dialogic, a “working-upon-each-other” (Rockas 1976: 45). While this is true, Rockas falls short of teasing out the potential “the subtext of stories” has on stage. He fails to differentiate narration that is written and narration that is performed. Based on my analysis of the co-presence of two different kinds of subtext in theatrical realism, it has become clear that we need to differentiate the Brechtian ‘theatrical subtext’ of narration on stage from the Stanislavskian ‘dramatic subtext’ of dialogue. Rockas himself allows for the presence of “tone, voice, the authorial presence” in written narration (ibid: 44), but does not modify this once he moves on to consider narration on stage. What I define as theatrical subtext is precisely this Brechtian gestus adopted by the actor vis-à-vis the narrated text and expressed in “tone, voice” and an “authorial presence” insofar as the actor can be seen as the source of the narration on stage.

Theatrical subtext treated as an attitude towards the characters adds an additional layer to the way the character's emotional relationships are expressed on stage. The actor is confronted with the complex task of not only expressing the 'dramatic subtext' but also of opening up different meanings through establishing his distance to the 'dramatic subtext' in his 'theatrical subtext'. At the beginning of *Black Beast Sorrow*, the audience witnessed the setting up of the barbecue and the tension implicit in the accompanying dialogue (consider, for example, Martin's ironic commentary "Friends. Isn't it wonderful.", Hilling 2009b: 9). Miranda's rivalry with Jennifer was one possible subtext for her character in this situation. By allowing her to verbalise her conscious thoughts which encapsulate this rivalry ("*Jennifer is not his wife, she used to be*"), the actress' non-verbal performance was freed up to explore further, possibly conflicting, emotional layers; for example; how she unconsciously felt about her conscious disliking of Jennifer. Moreover, this triadic way of conceptualizing subtext also did greater justice to the increased complexity of the narrator as a figure. No longer a figure of pure function, even the narrator gained subtextual emotions in relation to both her narration and her physical performance, even though she was not a fully-fledged character. More traditional definitions of subtext would deny the possibility of this *subtext of the performer*.

The potentiality of verbalised subtext

I have already hinted at the widening of potential meanings inherent in this additional performative subtextual level. Whereas dramatic realism posits the existence of a unified subject by allowing the presence of only one *coherent*

(though in itself complex and multi-layered) subtext for any given moment, theatrical realism can employ the subtext of performed narration to register internal conflict and the fragmentation of the self through the simultaneous presence of two parallel subtexts. This is especially noticeable when characters verbalise thoughts and feelings they themselves are not yet aware of. In our production of *Black Beast Sorrow*, the following lines were spoken by Martin:

Behind Martin stands Flynn, Jennifer's boyfriend. He steps out of the vehicle, sleepy, young. The sight of him shoots to the heart, his hair like earth, pleasingly dishevelled after a brief sleep, his body light. His eyes. Martin would say, his eyes are pools, dark and green, held by a bed of strong lids. (Hilling 2009b: 9)

The text expressed knowledge on the part of the actress (Higginson) that was incongruent with her character, whom she still continued to embody in this situation. The result was the creation of a flickering figure that simultaneously knew and did not know: his realisation of his love for Flynn only occurred later in the play ("*Martin looks over and maybe this is it, the moment he's overwhelmed with love*", *ibid*: 23). Higginson-as-Martin was in a situation of asynchrony between potentiality (the narrated knowledge of things to come) and act (his initial and unconscious reaction to this love: the act of looking) that is characteristic for the representation of world in theatrical realism. At this point, Martin looked from outside into his own heart and said what he did not consciously know yet. *End and Beginning* did not have a comparable situation of asynchrony between present and future, instead focussing on the asynchrony between present and past. When Peter thought back to a specific moment during his unemployment, he both entered that past event and made it present,

and remained in the present to look at what had happened from the vantage point of hindsight:

And this cigarette, he picks up the butt, has been lying here since the 15th of two years ago, I know it like it was today, I opened this bottle of beer on a Sunday morning at half past three, after I had returned all soaked, alone, then I became afraid. That's when I became afraid, that it'll never be like it used to be [...]. (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 16)

Birgit Haas comments on this double perspective on the self in Schimmelpfennig's plays: "Die Figuren erleben und kommentieren ihre Lage, werden von innen und von außen zugleich gezeigt, sind Kommentatoren und Involvierte auf einmal" [The figures experience and comment on their situation, they are shown from inside and outside simultaneously, are both commentators and participants] (Haas 2007a: 198). Haas relates this to Brecht's defamiliarisation effect in the way the character is distanced from him- or herself. What the narration brought out in this context is the *potentiality* imbued in the characters and their relationship. As we have seen above, narration on stage and its subtext perform the function of Brecht's *gestus* as defined by Pavis: "it intervenes to stop the movement and to comment on what might have been acted on stage." (cit. in the original English in: Haas 2006: 242). In the example above, Peter did not fully show his fear from within the moment, but his actor (O'Grady) approached it from outside with the *gestus* of fear. By making the characters the narrators of their own self, the use of dramatic and theatrical subtext made their interiority accessible to the audience in its full complexity and contradiction: we found out not only what motivates the action realised, but also other, simultaneously existing potentialities of action. Hilling's and Schimmelpfennig's plays have demonstrated that these potentialities can lie in

the past as well as the future. The approach in both plays is a combination of the subtextual strategies of naturalism with poetic strategies as also encountered for example in Shakespeare:

The naturalistic play, because of its limitations of form, generally contains more subtextual material: the dialogue of realism is smaller in dimension verbally, and says less than the poetic form, so much of the meaning is implied by the tones of voice, attitudes, actions. (Morrison 1984: 14).

In Hilling's and Schimmelpfennig's theatrical realism, the poetic expression of subtext through words is set *alongside* a physical expression through "tones of voice, attitudes, actions", thereby introducing a new note of interior complexity through the aspect of asynchrony. Through this heightening of potentiality in the interaction of dialogue, verbal (narrated) character-subtextual and non-verbal (performed) gestus-subtext, Schimmelpfennig and Hilling are able to show not only what a character is, but also what he or she can be at a given moment.

Rhythm and timing

This opening up of potentialities in the interplay between the verbalisation of narration and the gestus-subtext leads to the creation of moments where experiential time enfolds differently for audience and characters on stage. Since all potentialities exist simultaneously but can only be shown sequentially, the result is a moment suspended in time. Rhythm and pacing play a crucial part in the creation of these moments. During our rehearsals for *Black Beast Sorrow*, we did not differentiate stylistically between sections of dialogue and sections of narrated stage directions initially. Yet it soon became clear to us that they have

a different quality. During moments of narration, the focus was less evenly distributed among the characters and lay much more on the performer taking on the narrative function. The linguistic and poetic complexity of the narrated passages, in contrast to the short and relatively simple lines of dialogue, made it necessary for the audience to listen with concentration. In an analysis of the work of W.G. Sebald, Clive Scott uses the categories of “moment” and “instant” to mark the qualitative difference in how a reader (or in our case a spectator) can perceive a specific segment of time:

The moment derives an expandability from its metonymic and metaphoric capacities, which the instant does not share and by virtue of which we ‘feel able to inhabit it and be inhabited by it’. (Scott 2011: 225)

Consequently, our task for the narrative passages was to create ‘moments’ rather than ‘instants’. In order for body and text to enter into a metaphorical relationship in which they create fields of meaning that both overlap and differ, their relationship first had to be defamiliarised. Or, to speak in Benjamin’s terms: the gestures had to be taken out of their everyday flow and to be shown as interruptions (cp. Benjamin 1977: 521). What we needed was a method of focalization, of concentrating the audience’s attention on the narrating character and his or her story (as also performed physically by one or several of the other actors) as an internal digression from the external development of interaction. The continuation of a wide range of realistic incidental activities was detrimental to this focus. For example, we discovered in *End and Beginning* that Brown needed to suspend her movements every time she was voicing the Mother. This allowed her to interrupt the flow of time as experienced by the Girl in the Wedding Dress and to create moments which the character of the Mother can then occupy through her voice. Such a variation of the density of actions and

their pacing *in time* was one option of achieving focalization. In the rehearsals for *Black Beast Sorrow*, I started off by taking this to its logical extreme. I suggested a freezing of the surrounding action during moments of narration, a complete turning from the outer to the inner. However, this turned out to be unsatisfactory: it set apart these moments too sharply from the usual flow of events, thereby rupturing the development of dialogue and dramatic situation. It also implied a problematic separation between interiority and exteriority instead of creating an impression of Merleau-Ponty's in-betweenness. The still image might have the most fully realised metaphorical potential, but its interruption was too complete – it lacked a link to the flow of actions that allowed metaphoric gestures to arise out of the metonymical. Following Merleau-Ponty in his critique of Bergson's excessively rigid dichotomy between (exterior, quantitative) time and (interior, qualitative) duration, the characters' inward experience of time turned out not to be separate from but an extension of the outward flow of time (cp. Waldenfels and Giuliani 2005: 128).

Consequently, we worked increasingly with the idea of these moments of narrated interiority having a dreamlike quality, thereby reaching the formulation of "moments suspended in time" which in its metaphor of "suspension" implied a difference *and* a connection to its surroundings. To suggest a different level of time – clock-time bleeding into a Bergsonian 'durée', into an interior and experienced time – the actions during a narrated passage became smaller, less frequent, and slower. Similar to holding your breath, life continued but at a slower pace. This also gave the actions played out alongside the narrated text a heightened significance. By moving away from the a purely 'realistic' performance of movements in clock-time to an execution that equated the time the movements take with the significance they have for the characters' inner

life, the realm of emotive association came to replace the realm of logical succession. This allowed us to perceive the *simultaneous* potentialities of an action by separating them in time: one second becomes eternity. Or, as Waldenfels and Guilianì put it with reference to Merleau-Ponty:

“Jeder Augenblick will Ewigkeit”, wie Nietzsches Zarathustra verkündet; doch diese Ewigkeit “ist keine zweite Ordnung jenseits der Zeit, sie ist die Atmosphäre der Zeit selbst”, sie äußert sich als “Sublimierung der Gegenwart”.

[“Every moment desires eternity”, as Nietzsche’s Zarathustra announces; yet this eternity “is not a second order beyond time, it is the atmosphere of time itself”, and expresses itself as the “sublimation of the present”.] (Waldenfels and Giuliani 2005: 134)

The moment’s dreamlike asynchrony of word and action, of a group of usually simultaneous actions, or of emotion, or motivation and action therefore always introduced an aspect of defamiliarisation. The “sublimation of the present” was explored in the performative expansion of a word or a gesture. Jennifer simply held a bottle against Paul’s arm; and yet, the slowness of the movement (suggesting a significant deliberateness) and the holding of each other’s gaze came to express something above and beyond this situation – an unspoken longing inherent in the wish that she “*would roll the bottle once right around his arm*”; the desire “*for some bottle-genii-magic*” (Hilling 2009b: 25). The right use of focalization (through slow and reduced movements, through the other characters’ focus on this specific action) could create a situation that works like a magnet on the audience’s gaze and imagination. This moment was time in which they could mentally play out the potentiality of the situation.

In *End and Beginning*, I decided to extend the duration of the intonation of the demon names by the Mother as embodied by the Girl in the Wedding Dress in order to give these names a larger metaphorical meaning. During the burial of her daughter, the Mother listed the names of all the demons she had encountered in hell: “A shovel full on Satan, this is like water for his burning skin, a shovel full for Asasel, for Nisroch, Adrammelech, for Ramiel, Rimmon, Arioeh, Ägäon, Lilith, Asmodai” (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 14.). The sound of the names has the poetic quality of a litany. Our production combined this with a physical action, where Brown went to pick up a stone and put it down in a straight line for each of the names. This gave the performance a durational aspect that intensified the impression of the Mother’s suffering. Combined with this was the actress’ physical attitude towards the stones: unlike the names, which she pronounced with hatred, she handled the stones lovingly. Her gestus-subtext was to treat each stone like one part of the daughter’s body, which she is retrieving and laying to rest. The performance of this moment therefore combined two contrasting subtexts, two different sides of the Mother. In rehearsals, Brown commented on how the external routine of the slow walks also had an impact on the interiority of her character: as an actor, she was led to drop the mother’s anger bit by bit.

On the other hand, we discovered in the rehearsals for *End and Beginning* that it was not sufficient to simply extend the time it takes to speak a sentence or perform an action. When working on the long description of Peter’s messy flat that opened the play (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 1), I first suggested a slow, concentrated pace to allow the potentiality of each description to flourish. In order to develop material for such a metaphoric richness, we went through a visualisation exercise, as suggested by Brigid Panet. She emphasises how

When your character mentions absent people, past events or distant places, you must allow yourself the time to create them in your imagination. In your real life you will have met the people, lived through the past events and seen the distant places so, when you talk about them, sense memories arise vividly in your mind and you can recreate them effortlessly. When you play a character, you have not had any of these direct experiences, so you need to spend some time in creating them. (Panet 2009: 122)

I asked O’Grady to imagine each object he describes in all its details (texture, weight, smell, shape, etc.) and place it in a specific position on stage. However, we discovered that this was detrimental to the stylistic impact of the text in performance.⁴⁴ The emphasis in performing narrative texts such as *End and Beginning* lies not so much on “sense memories” – on the communication of the character’s relationship to persons and objects through subtext – but on the way these relationships are expressed by the shape of the text itself. Consequently, the suspension in time achieved through the visualisation exercise drained the text of significance and became tedious rather than creating metaphorical potentials. The sheer mass of the objects described, as well as the fact that they all belonged to the thematically coherent group of food and household items meant that in giving each object its own significance, we had stretched their metaphoric potential beyond its limits. Benjamin’s interruption, the creation of ‘moments suspended in time’ instead of instances, thus only seems to generate potentiality for short sequences. Our solution for the given longer passage was to go to the other extreme and find a *durée* that is *faster* than clock-time instead of slower. This approach allowed us to focus on the gestus-subtext rather than the dramatic subtext: instead of exploring the character’s

⁴⁴ Compare Gray’s comment on action ‘clogging’ the flow of the text (Gray 2012).

relationship with the text, we investigated the performer's relationship to it. O'Grady now performed the list of objects at break-neck speed. We then set an equally fast-paced sequence of gestures alongside this verbal performance. Whilst describing his flat, Peter created a pyramid out of the plastic wineglasses scattered on stage. Text and gestures were unconnected – I even asked O'Grady not to react physically to any hesitations or mistakes in the text. Both rhythms were fast but strictly separate. As a result, the metaphorical potential was transposed from the individual gestures to the overall virtuosity of the performance. Instead of being given time, the audience was consciously overloaded on the level of text as well as image. Metaphor arose out of the multiplicity of chaos in this instance. For example, the pyramid of wineglasses used to collapse at different points in the speech. It was astonishing to see that no matter where it happened, my own meaning-making process as an observer connected the collapse and the text in such a way as to turn the action into a metaphor. If the pyramid fell on “towering cleaning agents” (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 1), it became the image of these bottles; if it fell on “he tries to imagine his future” (ibid: 1), the collapse of the glasses came to signify the collapse of Peter's future.

The metaphorical relationship between text and body: probability of moments of heightened potentiality within the overall dramatic development

Actions sped up as well as those slowed down during passages of narration on stage highlight the different relationship between gesture and text in theatrical realism. The practical work on the physicalisation of narration reinforced what

had become evident in the rehearsal observations: that the formal positioning of *Black Beast Sorrow* and *End and Beginning* between the logic of dramatic realism and the associativeness of theatrical realism necessitated an approach that balanced the potentiality (possibility) of an action – its magical, dreamlike, metaphoric, aspect – with its actuality, its metonymic aspect and probability within the events of the play. As we have seen in the above section on rhythm, the devising process for the movements to accompany narration was initially relatively abstract, solely focusing on the potentiality of the moment and thus on metaphorical gestures. This extended to devising of the actual gestures themselves, as demonstrated by the following example. This stage direction from *Black Beast Sorrow* was narrated by Oskar and the narrator:

Miranda is Paul's girlfriend. She is wearing a T-shirt, imprinted on it, a comic. She's younger than he is, by ten years and she's pretty, very pretty, prettier than ever. She used to be a model, now she's a mother. A year ago, a good year, she gave birth to a child, Paul's child, a girl, Gloria. Gloria is now lying in Oskar's arms. His arms are slender, sinewy and long, his arms are branches. Oskar is Jennifer's brother, two, no, four years younger than her. He's an artist. Works of light. Gloria looks at him, looks silently into his red sunset face. (Hilling 2009b: 7)

We took the idea of Oskar as an artist and his idealisation of Miranda as a starting point: Oskar (Blyth) sculpted Miranda's (Horrell's) body into various shapes, finally forming a Pietà arrangement with Oskar as the mother holding Miranda's corpse (which was still holding the baby). While this arrangement was very powerful as a tableau in the way it prefigured Miranda's death and Oskar's secret desire to have a child, it did not relate to the situation surrounding it, in which Miranda wants to turn Paul's attention away from his ex-wife Jennifer by

making him hold their child, while Oskar interferes with Paul's wish to hold the baby himself. The full illustration of the situation's potentiality destroyed the pregnant balance between potentiality and actuality that characterises a metaphoric relationship between text and body. As a metaphorical gesture, it displayed similar weaknesses as, for example, Alexandr Richter's headstand in *Three Kingdoms* (cp. chapter 3).

As a result of this realisation, we concentrated our devising process for the physicalisation of the narrated stage directions on the heightened and magical transformation of movements, bodily positions, and physical relationships, as already existing in the dialogic scenes framing the stage direction. Through the development and extension of metonymic gestures into metaphorical ones, we reached the desired balance between potentiality and act, for example in a scene between Martin and Flynn. During the unpacking of the bus, Flynn got up from his brief nap and is watched by Martin. The narrator (Millward) stated:

Martin lowers his gaze, the sun settles warmly on his bald head. His gaze meets the crate of Beck's beer, the crate he is holding for Flynn in long hands, hands with strong veins running in all directions, blue and wild. He puts down the crate, the earth replies with a dry crack. (Hilling 2009b: 9)

In the production, both Martin and Flynn were about to grab the crate when the action was suspended. Thus far, the gestures were metonymic: they directly expressed the action on stage. Then however, metonymy became metaphor as Flynn took Martin's hand, held it up and investigated it. This was no longer contiguous with their action but operated on the principle of metaphoric similarity between Martin's fascination with Flynn's hand and his interaction with

it. In combination with the description, this action functioned like a close-up on Martin's hand; the audience's gaze was drawn in, and it felt as if we could see the veins on Martin's hand. The situation, the holding of the crate, transformed into a tender moment between the two characters and yet remained rooted in its actuality – the involvement of hands, the strain visible in the veins – and fully returned to it at the noise of the crack when Flynn had let go of Martin's hand, returned to the case, and actually put it down on the floor. It was as if this noise in its sharpness ended the suspension in time and fuses potentiality – which had briefly dominated the situation – again firmly with the actuality.

Another way of emphasising the potentiality of the metaphorical gesture imbued in an action was to separate the movement from its description. In the passage above, we heard that "*Martin lowers his gaze*". If performed simultaneous to this statement, the physical realisation of this lowering was reduced to the level of illustration. However, if an asynchrony was introduced, gesture and text did not simply reinforce each other. In our production, Martin lowered his gaze before the narrator mentioned it – the text therefore brought renewed attention to an action that might have escaped the audience as insignificant, and thus charged it with potential meaning. The logical relationship remained in the identity of described and enacted gesture, but was simultaneously destabilised through their separation in time. This split can also be achieved as a spatial asynchrony. For *End and Beginning*, I had consigned the two storylines to two clearly demarcated strips of space on the stage, visually separated and linked by the doorframe occupying the boundary. The story of the Girl in the Wedding Dress was enacted in the background, while the story of Peter and Frankie took place in the foreground. While the characters were present throughout, they usually did not interact. During a scene from the

other storyline, they would freeze, thereby drifting to the periphery of the audience's attention. Asynchrony between the text in the active storyline and the posture in the inactive one was therefore much more subdued than for example the active commentary during the aforementioned instances in Nübling's *Three Kingdoms*. However, this rigid boundary between foreground and background was dissolved when the Girl crossed the boundary and stepped through the door. In the final scene, when Peter and Frankie sat at the two ends of the 'table' (the doorframe lying on its side), the Girl in the Wedding Dress had returned to the background and sat behind the doorframe. At the same time, Frankie's description of Peter looking at the photo of his half-sister Isabel partly transformed her into the half-sister. Her presence hovered between the actuality of her primary character and the potentiality of the character superimposed on her. The spatially separated storylines of foreground and background were briefly fused into one in this instance, commenting on each other and expanding each other's possible meaning.

In my further exploration of the metaphorical relationship between body and text in *End and Beginning*, I extended the investigation to the use of objects as extensions of the body. Objects can become an extension of gestures and their signifying power under the "criterion of *manipulation*" (Sofer 2003: 12, original emphasis); they partake of the gesture's signifying aspect when manipulated by an actor. Moreover, they can partake of the character's interiority, as Merleau-Ponty points out: if "the distinction between subject and object is blurred in my body..., it is also blurred in the thing" (cit. in: Madison 1981: 98). In connecting exterior and interior, objects therefore become more than a mere thing. Sofer calls these manipulated objects props: "*Irrespective of its signifying function(s)*, a prop is something an object becomes, rather than

something an object is” (ibid, original emphasis). When this occurs, the objects can be “raised from their ‘transparent’ functional roles to a position of unexpected prominence and acquire “semiotic subjectivity” independent of the actor (Elam cit. in: Sofer 2003: 9). When we used objects in *Black Beast Sorrow*, their function was mostly a realistic one: as “scenic metonymies” (Honzl cit. in: Sofer 2003: 21), they helped to locate the scene (for example the earth, cones, and sticks at the beginning of the play indicating the forest) and were mostly used according to their common function – or, in Aristotelian terms, according to the aspect of actuality in the reality of their existence. A rare exception to this was the aforementioned transformation of Miranda’s scarf into her baby. During the rehearsals for *End and Beginning*, the transformation of objects from a state foregrounding their actuality to one foregrounding their potentiality became more important – “props easily slide from metonymy to metaphor” (Sofer 2003: 21). I tried to tease out what any given object could *become* in addition to what it already *was*. As in my treatment of gestures, I paid close attention to how these metaphorical transformations could occur in close interaction with their metonymical function throughout the performance as a whole. Before rehearsals, I chose a range of objects that best combined such a metonymic function in the creation of the world on stage with a larger metaphoric meaning. The restriction of the objects was aimed to bring out their “multiple functions” and to create a situation where, “wie in den Spielen der Kinder und in Improvisationen werden mit sehr gewöhnlichen Gegenständen Welten erschaffen” [as in children’s games and in improvisations, worlds are created with very ordinary objects] (Grotowski 2006: 82). The object that turned out to have the greatest symbolic significance as well as the most potential for

transformation in the context of *End and Beginning* was the doorway. It possessed what Avigal and Rimmon-Kenan call the 'mobility of the object:

For our purpose, the "mobility" of a sign is defined as its capacity to change its status, channel, meaning and functioning within the framework of the same discourse and at its different levels of communication. The multiple transformations of the object can co-exist within the same discourse, even when they are mutually exclusive.

(Avigal and Rimmon-Kenan 1981: 13)

The doorway was a simple wooden frame without an actual door. Set into the upper half was a smaller empty frame, which appeared like a little window. The doorway was mounted on four wheels for mobility. I chose this object primarily for the scenes with the Girl in the Wedding Dress to signify the doorway between the worlds of the living and the dead, thereby emphasising her transformation into a psychopomp figure. Its rectangular shape also came to stand for the grave she was digging. Being upright, it was as if the perspective was tilted and we could watch her partly from above, already inside the grave itself. This symbolic function was first activated when the Girl enters the frame in her second scene where she describes how she "thrusts the spade into the earth, digs her grave" (ibid, 5). Brown used the frame to suspend herself when playing the Mother shouting down into the grave and the Girl shouting up. As the mother, she grabbed both sides of the frames and leant forward, looking towards the floor. When she answered as the Girl, she held this horizontal position but turned around so that she was now facing up. With one small change, a simple posture was able to communicate the entire situation: "I don't see anything below me but the soil / and above me the clouds" (ibid, 9). When entering the realm of the demons, she finally passed through this door, leaving

the vertical strip to which her performance was constricted so far and penetrating the space formerly assigned to the scenes with Peter and Frankie.⁴⁵ At the very end of the piece, the doorframe was put down on its longer side and serves as a table during Peter's and Frankie's final conversation. It also briefly transformed into a picture frame when Frankie described how Peter "looks at the photo on the fridge", with the Girl in the Wedding Dress playing the part of his half-sister Isabel depicted in the photo. All these uses demonstrated the "mobility" of what the door signified. While its actual function as a door only came to the forefront once, the symbolic potential of a doorway coloured the whole production. In addition, the way the actors engaged with the shape and the material of the door activated its metaphorical potential to take on a variety of different functions in the fictional world(s) on stage.

All props on stage have a double nature. According to Bert O. States, it is necessary to see "the stage object simultaneously as representing something else (the semiotic attitude) and as the thing-in-itself (the phenomenological attitude) (cit. in: Sofer 2003: 15). This corresponds to the simultaneity of potentiality and actuality in the gesture. In our engagement with the objects, we tried to highlight the metaphoric connotations whilst remaining aware of the prop's actuality. As with the gestures, metaphorical meaning in objects only occurred at particular 'moments': "its meaning – those connotations and denotations for which it stands – is a *temporal contract* established between the actor and spectator for the duration of the performance" (ibid: 14). This metaphoric meaning was also subject to changes that were controlled by the actor's manipulation during this duration. I consciously chose simple everyday

⁴⁵ I will discuss my use of foreground and background and their role in shaping the metaphorical relationship between text and body at the end of this section, aligned its spatial implications with the temporal notion of asynchrony.

objects for the most part, such as glasses, stones, a rope. According to Avigal and Rimmon-Kenan,

in order to facilitate the spectator's acceptance of resemantization and of the basic "contract" underlying it, namely that the identity of objects is relative and amenable to transformation in the hands of the actors and the characters, the contemporary experimental theater deliberately chooses objects which can be grasped as simple raw materials even in the spectator's everyday universe of discourse. (Avigal and Rimmon-Kenan 1981: 21)

The apparent conventionality of these objects made their later transformations stand out more sharply. For example, we used a large number of glasses (roughly thirty) during the performance. These corresponded to the "glasses, dried-up wine glasses, mugs, cups, all used" (ibid: 2) present in Peter's flat, but they were no exact equivalent: they are all uniform, unused plastic wine glasses. As such, they *stood in* for all the other glasses in the actors' and audience's imagination, but also created a more abstract visual impression on their own. At the beginning of the piece, the glasses were lined up neatly in three rows across the whole width of the stage. As the performance progressed and they were used, this order was disturbed. Thus, we were able to show in the progression of the performance the deterioration of Peter's state, to which the text returned at the end with an exact repetition of the description of his flat (ibid: 15).

Our key exercise for our exploration of the transformation of objects from everyday to metaphorical signification consisted of two stages of

development.⁴⁶ In the first stage, the actors were presented with one object each and are asked to explore individually all the ways this object is usually employed. This allowed them to enact the common uses of the object that usually are the actor's first response to them. For example, Brown was presented with several plastic wine-glasses. She used them to drink from, to scoop water and wash her hands, and so on. During the second stage, the actor explored different and imaginative ways the objects can be used. Here, Brown used the glasses to create the sound of horses galloping, or to create telescope eyes.

The second stage of the exercise allowed actor and spectator to see the object in a new light, to encounter it as if unfamiliar. At this stage, it was crucial to realise that

iconic resemblance is not a prerequisite for signification; in nonillusionistic traditions [...] "A real object may be substituted on the set by a symbol if this symbol is able to transfer the object's own signs to itself". (Sofer 2003: 9)

It is not an outward similarity that fuelled the transformation. Instead, it was achieved through the actor's focus:

[T]he full blaze of their concentration is on the puppet or object. Their relationship to everything that is happening is through the puppet [...]. Their consciousness of the audience and their relation to the performance is absorbed via the puppet. (Bicât 2007: 103)

In addition, the material qualities of the object gained significance: its texture, sound, shape, and so on. It was therefore important to use the actual objects

⁴⁶ I am indebted to Effrosyni Mastrakolou for aspects of this exercise.

from the very beginning of the rehearsal process. Rehearsals for dramatic realism can normally work with stand-ins for the actual objects or even mime their use, since this style draws mostly on their common usage. This is especially clear in the mimed use of objects during rehearsal, where the action only encapsulates the object's "iconic function in relation to the socio-historical context of the spectator" (Avigal and Rimmon-Kenan 1981: 18). Theatrical realism however, as in *End and Beginning*, attempts to unlock

the potentialities of the object – [...] what Brecht called its "functionality" in the performance. In the Brechtian tradition, a "functional object" is one which is present on stage and contributes to the performance: "ce qui n'y contribue pas n'a rien à y faire". (ibid: 18f)

Functionality in our exercise therefore meant new and imaginative uses that were not determined by common usage, but only by the material qualities of the objects themselves. It treated the objects not as socio-historically pre-determined in their function, but as entities with identities that can be as mutable as human ones. Having access to a fixed range of objects from the beginning therefore enabled us to employ the second stage of the object improvisation exercise to unlock their potentiality in free play unrelated to the text, creating a store of these potential uses that we could draw on when working on a specific scene. In this way, the exercise also enabled a mutual creative exchange between actors and director: some of the abstract uses suggested by the actors could spark off other images and uses in the director's head, who communicated these back to the actors. Moreover, the actor could focus on the creation of different uses without being burdened by the task of selecting them according to their associative usefulness, as this role was assumed by the director. This dialectical development of possible uses of object

most fully capitalised on the fundamental associative nature of metaphors as a “joining a plurality of worlds” (Jakobson cit. in: Lodge 1979: 73, cf. chapter 1). The exercise also spread the task of investigating the objects’ potentialities amongst all actors, and separated it from other acting tasks, thereby allowing them to fully focus on the actual and potential aspect of each object separately. As a result, the combination of the exercise with the rehearsal of specific scenes provided an extremely useful balance between the exploration of an object’s potentiality (its use not tied down by *any* function, not even the associative demands of the text) and the act of re-connecting this exploration to its actuality as defined by the context of the scene.

The task during the rehearsals of the actual scenes from *End and Beginning* then consisted in identifying those potentialities in the objects that were most closely linked to the actualities of the scene. Rather than inventing the point of comparison (the use of the object) as well as how this use metaphorically related to the scene at the same time, it reduced the work in the scene rehearsal itself to the latter: all we had to do was to establish the associative connection typical of a metaphor between a specific moment in the text and one of the potentialities of the objects we had already uncovered. This also ensured that the chosen metaphorical use of the object was in close correspondence with its metonymic use in the rest of the scene. For example, Brown first improvised the realistic uses and then the abstract uses of the spade. During these improvisations, several images arose that were powerful in their associative potential in relation to the text. In one instance, she put her naked foot on the spade in order to mime digging. What was arresting in this image was the fragility of the naked foot in contrast to the sharp edge and the hardness of the spade – an appropriate metaphor for the fate of the Girl in the

Wedding Dress. Another image with metaphorical potential was Brown's way of carrying the spade on her shoulders. This resembled a cross, therefore prefiguring her death and death-wish as well as creating a contrasting image to her interaction with the demons. Both images were used in the performance during the first scene with the Girl in the Wedding Dress, where we learnt that she is "only fifteen and already sick unto death" and that she desired to "pledge herself to the Devil" (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 3). In this instance, the task of balancing between an object's metaphorical potential and its metonymic use throughout the rest of the play clearly was the director's responsibility.

Another exercise, however, re-activated the actors' creative input into this act of balancing meanings, and served as a link between pure object improvisation as described above, and the rehearsal of scenes in character and with text. I wanted to enable the actors themselves to work on the associative connections between the pool of gestures, the objects and the text. As before, I decided that the best way to fully focus only on the activation and realisation of this associative sensibility would be to isolate it from other acting tasks. I proposed a split between spoken text and performed action, so that the actors could concentrate on the associative connection between their gestures and use of objects, and the text. In the resulting exercise, I read out the text of the scene aloud, while the actors were asked to react to this text in a purely physical way, interacting with the space and our set of objects. These reactions were spontaneous and improvised, but obviously based on the object improvisations as well as their previous work on their character during other scenes of the play. I called this exercise 'Playback Improvisation', referring on the one hand to the notion of playback theatre, where actors enact the physical score to a pre-recorded text, and emphasising on the other hand that in this

exercise the physical score is fluid and not necessarily realistic. I introduced 'Playback Improvisation' on the third day of rehearsal, and it became our standard way of exploring a new scene. As the shape of the stage and the exact position of the objects emerged, this specific spatial arrangement of objects became the starting point for their physical explorations. Occasionally, I also put the actors into concrete starting positions within this spatial arrangement.

The scene between Peter and Frankie towards the middle of our performance script, where Peter told Frankie about the encounter he had with a girl at a lake in new Mexico, can serve to illustrate the opportunities and drawbacks of 'Playback Improvisation' for the creation of a scene. While I read out the section in which Peter (O'Grady) described how he "started looking for [...] the tiny shining bright lights" in the girl's hair (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 10), O'Grady started searching for something in the coil of rope present on stage. As an image this was a good starting point since it was rooted in a realistic depiction of the searching action described in the text, but enacted it on a different object. In order to emphasise the leap from the metonymic to the metaphorical further, I suggested that Borges positioned her head on top of the coil of rope. In this way, she becomes the girl Peter is talking about, with the rope a metonymic extension of her hair. After Peter had transitioned from her hair to the rope and as he began to become entangled in it, the metaphorical nature of the object took over. His struggle with the rope visualised how he becomes trapped in this other world how, he was "led [...] further and further and deeper and deeper" (ibid: 10). The spectator could also link this to Peter's broader entrapment in his situation of frustration and despair. O'Grady's use of

the rope was therefore an example of how 'Playback Improvisation' can use text to engender an imaginative leap of association in the actor.

At the same time, it was the necessity of this imaginative leap that could impair the success of this method at times. The narrative nature of the text in question meant that there were not many concrete actions. The need to represent thoughts, emotions, or intellectual questions through physicality or objects could be daunting for actors without experience in this field. This was especially true if the actors focus too hard on generating the associative gestures intellectually instead of allowing for spontaneity and free play. The result was often the recourse to simple illustration. This was exemplified in the same scene by Borges as Frankie. She remained mostly inactive during the scene, which demonstrated her feeling of inhibition, of 'not being inspired'. The points where she did execute an action are those where the text itself mentions an activity. When Frankie talked about how he "would love to have this gleam in my bones", she indicated her bones, and when he described how he "drinks coffee" (ibid: 10), she used one of the plastic wineglasses on stage to drink. It was therefore crucial to encourage the actors to remain active throughout the whole time the scene was read out, and to let associative connections arise spontaneously.

When I reflected upon our rehearsal process, it occurred to me that one way of preventing simple illustration as far as possible is to separate the exercise into the same two stages as the object improvisation. The first step would then be a realistic physicalisation of the read text, while the second would consist of a more abstract and explorative one. Furthermore, an earlier exercise could furnish the actors with a set of heightened postures and gestures. This

could be achieved through the recreation of photos and paintings as *tableaux vivants*. The director could choose these images in such a way that they reflect thematic and emotional aspects of the play, thereby providing the actors with more associative links between their repertoire of gestures and the text itself. For *End and Beginning*, I worked for example with El Greco's *The Annunciation* and *The Opening of the Fifth Seal* in relation to the scenes with the Girl in the Wedding Dress in order to play through different embodiments of exultation and delirium. The final editing of gestures and use of objects to ensure the desired balance between potentiality and actuality remained the task of the director and could only be achieved through successive sedimentation throughout the repeated rehearsals of a scene.

The chorus: intersubjectivity, inbetweenness, and the interplay between musical abstraction and psychological concretisation of language

In Part II of *Black Beast Sorrow*, my compositional choices focused on the use of the chorus and its relationship with the individual characters creating it, while I did not work with a chorus for *End and Beginning*.⁴⁷ In *Black Beast Sorrow*, Hilling's development of the text away from coherent psychological subjects and towards a more generalised 'you' suggested the chorus as a way of speaking not tied to the individual, a public sharing of these most intimate moments of pain and suffering. Ulrike Haß speaks in this context about "der Chor als Form der Veröffentlichung" [the chorus as a form of making public] (Haß 1999: 73). Nonetheless, the best approach was again to ground abstraction and de-

⁴⁷ The full text of the latter includes a storyline of a group of drunks that could have been treated chorically. However, due to the availability of actors and the decision to explore the interaction between narrated text and gesture more, I decided not to include this section in our project.

individualisation (which increased in this part of the script) in the concrete situations and characters of Part I. Consequently, the chorus in our production was one poised between individuality and group identity – it was the combined consciousness, the intersubjective voice of the six characters. When they exclaim “The fire moves to the west. / The bus is parked to the west of the group” (Hilling 2009b: 34), their agitation stemmed from the shared individual anxiety about the threat of the fire. They reacted in one voice, but were motivated to do so as individuals. I drew on some of Sebastian Nübling’s exercises for the chorus in order to allow the students to develop this intersubjective consciousness, employing Nübling’s motto: “Achte auf alle, außer auf dich selbst!” [pay attention to everyone except yourself!] (Nübling 1998: 75). We specifically used one exercise to develop this kind of group consciousness that I would call ‘lateral awareness’. Called “Walk, Run, Freeze”, in this exercise the participants had to walk through the space, occupying it in its entirety, and organically, as a group, increase the tempo or stop in sudden freezes. Everyone had to pay attention to each other’s impulses and react to them.⁴⁸ Later experience during the actual scene work with the chorus indicated that we could have benefited from spending more time on this and similar exercises. This highlighted how crucial the basic creation of a chorus identity and the development of everyone’s lateral awareness are for any chorus work.

Throughout Part II of *Black Beast Sorrow*, the individual characters separated from the chorus and merged back into it. Separation from the chorus indicated a close-up on one person in the midst of the mayhem of the forest fire, suspended in time like the narrated stage directions before:

[Chorus]: You no longer think of screaming.

⁴⁸ Cp. Nübling 1998: 68-70

[Flynn]: You think of breathing.

Breathing.

That's all you want

[Chorus]: You reduce your demands. (Hilling 2009b: 37)

The actors' reintegration into the chorus marked the return to the relentless pushing forward that characterises the pacing of the first sections in Part II. As can be seen, a dialogic structure emerged, but it was one in which the characters' interiority was in dialogue with itself. Dreyse Passos de Carvalho describes this defamiliarisation of dialogue in Einar Schleef's work:

Selbst dort, wo formal eine dialogische Struktur als Wechsel zwischen verschiedenen Sprechern vorhanden ist, wird diese häufig durch die Aufhebung des Rollenträgerkonzepts und/oder die Suspension der kommunikativen Funktion von Sprache durch die Markierung der Materialität der Stimme verfremdet.

[The dialogic structure is often defamiliarised through the suspension of the concept of character and/or the suspension of the communicative function of language even at those points where a dialogical structure as an exchange between different speakers formally exists.] (Dreyse Passos de Carvalho 1999: 45)

In contrast to Schleef's work, my chorus retained stronger traces of character and of the communicative function of language; the chorus in *Black Beast Sorrow* is not an unindividuated mass speaking a strongly fragmented text like, for example, Schleef's chorus in *Ein Sportstück*. However, the direction towards a defamiliarised dialogue is also present. Unlike in Part I, individuals are no longer in communication with each other, but with a larger group to which they

belong. Consequently, we perceive a tension between a dialogical structure (statement and reply) and a simultaneous dissolution of the individual speaker that has certain parallels to Schleef's choric practice, in spite of its stronger deindividualising impulse.

The chorus voiced the subconscious demands and fears harrowing all of the characters: everybody was asking each other, everyone was asking him- or herself. The individual – here Flynn – tried to establish its own integrity vis-à-vis a situation that constantly threatened to completely exteriorise its interiority. In other words, we witnessed instances of individuals being born, being torn out of the mass of the chorus, and returning back to it. Hence, the chorus could be seen as the characters' interiority turned inside out and stripped of its boundaries, i.e. as one of the fullest realisations of Merleau-Ponty's realm of the flesh, the inbetweenness, where interiority is folded unto exteriority.

If interiority came to be expressed in purely outward terms, psychological motivation (for example Stanislavsky's objectives) was counterbalanced by formal and structural choices. The delivery of sentences remained rooted in meaning, but defamiliarised and heightened in accordance with the extreme situation through techniques such as musicalisation. This choice was inspired by Einar Schleef's work with the chorus, in which he pays meticulous attention to material factors of language such as rhythm, pitch, and loudness.⁴⁹ Consider for example the following choric passage:

You'd like to say, the scream is louder than anything you've ever heard
before, a scream that penetrates the marrow of your bones, tears

⁴⁹ Cp. Dreyse Passos de Carvalho's description of Schleef's "Theatricalisation of Voice" (Dreyse Passos de Carvalho 1999: 93-137).

through your heart, the scream of a mother, screaming for the life of her daughter. But this wouldn't be true. The fire is louder. (Hilling 2009b: 35)

In an early exercise, the students were given one specific vocal aspect (pitch, rhythm, loudness, fragmentation of sense) with which to work on the passage. After their separate presentations, I chose those aspects that foregrounded the materiality of the words while at the same time helping to bring out the emotional significance of the sentences. As a result, every "scream" was shouted in the performance, underlining the meaning of the word by its physical realisation. "Penetrates the marrow of your bones" was delivered slowly and with an ominous overtone, a drawing out that allows the audience to imagine the pain expressed through this metaphor. Finally, "tears" acquired a screeching sound that onomatopoeically performs the act of tearing. Even though all chorus passages were spoken together and were practised intensely throughout rehearsals, the intended outcome was not uniformity. Haß describes the interaction of voices in a chorus as follows:

Anders als beim *unisono*-Gesang sind die Stimmen jedoch nicht auf bestimmte Tonhöhen vereinheitlicht, sie sind nicht nach dem Prinzip "Viele werden eins" zusammengefügt. Vielmehr behält jede Stimme im Sprechen ihre Eigenheiten bei, und die tonalen Beziehungen zwischen den Stimmen bleiben unreguliert. Von daher tritt nicht das Merkmal der Vereinheitlichung, sondern das der *Gleichzeitigkeit* in den Vordergrund.

[In contrast to unison singing, the voices are not united in distinctive pitches, they are not assembled according to the principle "many become one". Instead, every voice retains its particularity when speaking, and the tonal relationships between the voices remain

unregulated. Therefore, it is the element of *synchronicity* and not of uniformity that emerges as the dominant one.] (Haß 1999: 79)

I was particularly interested in this synchronicity of differences, since it allowed me to investigate through the voice of the chorus the principle of metaphoric relationship between body and text described above.

In our staging of the scene “The Body” in Part II of *Black Beast Sorrow*, the materiality of the voice and of the body creating the voice was shown to connect text, body, and psychological situation even more intimately than the staging of the previous section of Part II. Throughout the whole scene, the performers had to hold a physically strenuous plank position, like an interrupted push-up, and had to speak in this situation. The more difficult it became to hold this position the more their voices acquired a strained, pressed quality appropriate to the extreme stress of the forest fire they describe. The traditional theatrical voice (‘speaking’⁵⁰, projected, enunciated, audible) was stretched into unusual shapes, so that the pain was not only transmitted intellectually through the words as semiotic signs, but also bodily and emotionally through elements of the voice with a materiality in excess of the purely semiotic, such as pressure, pitch, tempo, breath, interruptions and so on. Moreover, the effect on their bodies resulted in an extremely believable performance of pain when they stood up and spoke as individual voices: faces were pinched, muscles shaking, even the standing up itself was no longer an easy and controlled motion. In *End and Beginning*, we explored a similar effect of physical situation on voice for individual narration. Towards the end of the performance Frankie (Borges) returned once again to the description of his fatal flight: “Pebble Beach, do you know, where that is? That’s at the pacific coast between Los Angeles and San

⁵⁰ Compare chapter 2.

Francisco, I fly with the night flight to LA [...]” (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 14). As he began, he was lying on the floor, on the threshold of the doorframe and between Peter’s legs, who was standing directly over him. As the account of the flight developed, Frankie tried to stand up, as if compelled to motion by the description of motion. However, Peter pinned him between his legs; Frankie thus had to struggle to gain the freedom of the flight. This struggle between freedom and release encapsulated the metaphoric significance of the flight as an escape from the constraints and failures of his German acting career in one simple movement. Moreover, the struggle also coloured Frankie’s voice, which became more strained. What could have been a neutral narration in hindsight becomes a reliving of the situation in the act of telling it. Both the plank position of the chorus in *Black Beast Sorrow* and the struggle to escape in *End and Beginning* illustrated how body and voice can be connected on the level of materiality, not stemming from psychological motivations but still expressing interiority in a metaphorical way.

As can be seen, physical abstraction and psychological-emotional concretisation do not have to be mutually exclusive. Indeed, the interrelation between chorus and individual in our production of *Black Beast Sorrow* made it possible to separate abstraction and concretisation and have them enter into a contrapuntal relationship. In the choral performance above, taken from the section entitled “The Scream”, the chorus was realised in opposition to the individual character of Miranda. As the mother being described, we saw her performing emotionally charged versions of the chorus’ formalised movements: putting her hands over her ears, turning around looking for her child, crouching down in despair, etc. This allowed the audience to experience the situation in both a detached and empathic way: they felt Miranda’s execution of the action

together with her while at the same time reflecting upon the narration of her actions together with the chorus. The formalisation of narration introduced a gap, a note of difference between itself and the action performed.

ACTING

Stepping in and out of character

My discussion of compositional aspects of the relationship between narration and the body inevitably touched upon performative aspects as well. I will now turn my attention to these, since the main challenge in rehearsing *Black Beast Sorrow* and *End and Beginning* with the students lay here. In the first part of Hilling's play, the quick changes into and out of the narrated moments of the stage directions were difficult to handle in relation to a performer's character. The student actors often asked about their attitude in relation to the narrated passages: are they told neutrally, i.e. by the performer, do they come from a narrator-figure, or are they related to their primary character and how? As we have seen, the compositional focus related stage directions as characterisations closely to the characters. When Jennifer described her ex-husband Paul as "*strong, immovable*" (Hilling 2009b: 7) and he perceived how "*she smiles*" (ibid: 7), the statements came directly from the characters, and the way they were uttered added to the audience's perception of them. And yet the stage directions spoken by the characters differed qualitatively from their dialogue. I have already discussed how the subtext of narration on stage foregrounds the performer and his relationship to character and situation. This was much more obvious in the structure of *End and Beginning*. Since we approached all text as stemming from the characters, and since the playtext included much less

dialogue in the dramatic realist sense, both the personal motivation and the distanced quality of the narration was much more obvious to the actors. Moreover, my previous work on *Black Beast Sorrow* also allowed me to articulate this quality of the text more clearly.

The approach of stage directions as verbalised character-subtext with their own non-verbal gestus-subtext helped to increase the empathic link between the characters and audience in both projects. The stage directions often contained information about a character's emotions. Consequently, they provided a privileged glimpse of the characters' interiority and how it was created by the actor who positioned him- or herself in relation to the description of their character's emotions. *Because* these stage directions and descriptions functioned like subtext, the performers needed to add a note of difference, of distance similar to what Brecht describes in the Street Scene: a “unvermittelte[r] Übergang von der Darstellung zum Kommentar [direct transition from representation to commentary] (Brecht 1993a: 378) in which “der Schauspieler [...] Demonstrant bleiben [muß]; er muss den Demonstrierten als eine fremde Person wiedergeben” [the actor [and character-as-actor] must remain a demonstrator, he must present the person demonstrated as a stranger” (ibid: 22: 376) – especially if it is him- or herself! Our exploration of stage directions as spoken text therefore demonstrated the need for the kind of acting techniques explored by Nübling in *Three Kingdoms*.

In *End and Beginning*, we worked with another aspect of the character as demonstrator in the scenes between the Girl in the Wedding Dress and her Mother. In taking over the part of the Mother as well, the Girl was *demonstrating* to the audience how her Mother would speak. What we experienced was not

the Mother herself as a separate character, but the Mother as seen by the Girl. We experimented with several techniques to create the necessary distance. The crucial question was to bring about an interruption of the flow of the Girl's physical and psychological development, of her through-lines, and to clearly mark the moment of transition from the actor playing a character to the actor playing a character who was herself playing a character. As mentioned in the section "Rhythm and Timing" above, the suspension of physical movement was crucial. In suspending movement, the actor directed our attention away from his or her own body, which we had come to identify closely with his or her main character. Once the attention was directed away from the actor's own body, "the embodying power of the voice" was so strong that it "conjure[d] for itself a different kind of body; an imaginary body which may contradict, compete with, replace, or even reshape the actual, visible body of the speaker" (Connor 2000: 36). This is how the Mother came into being in our production of *End and Beginning*.

In another instance of ventriloquism, Peter took over Frankie's voice in one situation at the end of the performance, when he played through all the reproaches concerning his acting career:

You've never been special, you've never been good, you were just young, young, young.

What? (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 16)

Peter and Frankie stood next to each other. During the first sentence, Peter took hold of Frankie's face and moves his mouth, literally using him as a puppet. As he did so, he faced Frankie, thereby focusing the attention away from him and towards the supposed source of his voice. For the second

sentence, he let go of Peter, took a step back and faced the audience – the attention returned to Frankie. In this way, Peter was able to both voice and reject the reproaches inside his head. Once more, he used Frankie as a function of himself, as a psychopomp between his conscious and unconscious mind. He employed ventriloquism to exteriorise aspects of his interiority.

The flow and the suspension of movement were used as tools to direct the audience's focus. Consequently, the body was the main site of the moment of distance during the act of ventriloquism. The aspect of identification was restricted to the voice and even the voice itself did not fully operate on the level of identification. Brown used a deeper voice as the Mother, both to achieve a greater contrast to her normal voice and for its comic effect. The voice was not so much that of her Mother as a separately realised, independent character, but that of the caricature of the Mother existing in the Girl's mind. The exaggeration of the caricature in itself expressed distance. However, in contrast to Brecht's goal to use this technique "to portray social processes as seen in their causal relationships" (ibid: 546), the actors in Hilling's and Schimmelpfennig's pieces used it for a deeper investigation of the character's interiority. This effected a defamiliarisation of interiority, the presentation of the character's emotion from a different point of view. As we have seen, even ventriloquised characters became functions of the ventriloquizing character's interiority. Stepping in and out of character needed to be handled deftly, for example through the suspension of the flow of movement described above. The moments of transformation happened very quickly, so the performers did not have the time to build up towards this distance. The result of a fluid change between distance and identification was an ambiguous attitude with a performative effect similar to the literary device of free indirect speech, which Pascal defines as "a double

intonation, that of the character and that of the narrator” (Pascal 1977: 18).⁵¹ We experienced the voice and body of the character, but through the focalization of a separate narrating entity. As with free indirect speech, “it [was] often unclear whether a passage is objective (narratorial) narration or subjective ‘erlebte Rede’” (ibid: 29). The character’s interiority was simultaneously shown from inside and outside and thus made it accessible to the audience whilst remaining radically incommensurable.

The requirements of dramatic realism and theatrical realism went hand in hand here. Sartre underlines “dass es keinen echten Gegensatz zwischen der dramatischen und der epischen Form gibt” [that there is no real opposition between the dramatic and the epic form] (cit. in: Haas 2007a: 52) and Haas sees in the combination of these two forms a “dialektisches Drama, dass sich im Spannungsfeld von Psychologie und Objektivierung bewegt” [dialectical drama moving in the field of tension between psychology and objectification] (Haas 2007a: 52). In order to distance themselves from their characters, the performers needed to have created strong and clearly defined characters in the first place. In order for the stepping out of character to register as a significant change of performative attitude, the actors’ dramatic characters needed to be believable and to possess objectives, super-objectives, and an inner life. Our failures in rehearsal therefore illustrated very clearly the already quoted opinion of Brecht’s that “Selbst die Einfühlung [...]so eine mögliche Methode der Rollendarbeit im Probenprozeß [wird]; durch sie können Schauspieler kennenlernen, was sie zu verfremden haben” [even empathy [...] becomes a possible method to work on a role during the rehearsal process; through it, the actors can learn what they have to defamiliarise] (Roselt 2005: 276).

⁵¹ The German term for free indirect speech, “erlebte Rede” (experienced or lived speech), neatly emphasises the dramatic aspect of “mimicry” (Pascal 1977: 19).

For *Black Beast Sorrow*, I worked on this balance between empathy and defamiliarisation with the performers by starting our process with rehearsals focusing purely on the dialogue. The narrated stage directions were taken out completely to enable the performers to experience the building of conflict and the development of their characters and relationships. Only when they had an understanding of the dramatic arc and development in time of this ‘realistic’ dialogic level did I introduce the additional level of the ‘moments suspended in time’ of narration. In the act of becoming the narrator of the character’s own self, it was of prime importance not to lose identification with the character. In order to rein in any distancing that was too extreme, I asked the students to perform their character’s self-narration in the first person, directly addressing one of the other characters. So, Jennifer’s line “*She is older than Paul, slightly, one, two years, her eyes are brown and big, her lashes dense*” became “*I am older than you, slightly, one, two years, my eyes are brown and big, my lashes dense*” (Hilling 2009b: 7). This increased the level of identification and helped to relate the narration to the development of relationships.⁵² Once this had been internalised, the return to the original third person was relatively easy.

An additional challenge was the need to motivate the devised, dreamlike moments that accompanied the stage directions from the characters. This was another example of the meshing between the acting techniques of dramatic and theatrical realism. When Jennifer told the story of how she and Flynn met in the third person as written (ibid: 28), we experimented with the idea of the other characters enacting this story. I described this as the characters “goofing around”: having drunk quite a bit and reaching the end of the evening, Oskar,

⁵² Brigid Panet’s ‘ghosting’ exercise proved also extremely valuable in reminding the students to perform the relational aspect of the stage directions. In this line-learning exercise, a fellow student whispers the lines into the performer’s ear, so that she can fully focus on addressing the line to a conversation partner (cf. Panet 2009: 46).

Miranda, and Paul took Jennifer's story as a pretext to have a bit of fun. Only when Miranda and Paul dragged up Martin, Oskar's partner with whom he had quarrelled just before this scene, did this play-within-a-play take on a more serious tone. What started as a humorous duplication of the narration (with Oskar standing up on "The Flynns' singer. They said. Is called Flynn" (ibid: 28), taking up an imaginary microphone and beginning to sing) turned into a parallel story. The conflict of Martin's and Oskar's crumbling relationship was contrasted with the idealised love-story between Flynn and the girl at the wedding. At the moment when "the girl, so they said, touched him" (ibid), Oskar took Martin's arm and put his hand on his cheek to achieve this touch; when the girl "fainted" (ibid: 28), overcome with love and passion, Martin instead turned away sad and disillusioned. In the realisation of this contrapuntal relationship between the story narrated by Jennifer and the story enacted by the other characters' bodies, the playful attitude coming from the performer's relationship to the characters was hard to understand and realise for the students.

Given the fact that there was much less dialogue in *End and Beginning*, the attempt to focus on dialogue in order to explore the psychological side of the characters proved to be difficult. Initially, I experimented with using improvisations to turn the narration into dialogue. First, we discussed the relationships underlying each scene. For example, we identified the opening scene of the play with its long descriptions of Peter's flat as also expressing the peculiar nature of the friendship between Peter and Frankie. I then asked the actors to create a dialogue focusing on this friendship but based on the theme of the scene itself. In this instance, they talked about the mess in Peter's flat and how this reflects his current emotional state. The focus of this improvisation was to formulate a clear objective as to *why* they are telling each other their

various stories, and to turn every narration into a narration addressed to the other character. I encouraged them to emphasise this dialogical and relational aspect through physical interaction and eye contact.

I also asked the actors to ‘action’ their text. When discussing objectives, Stanislavski advises that “every objective must carry in itself the germ of action” (Stanislavski 1980: 123) and that objectives are best described by choosing “a verb instead of a noun” (ibid: 126). Turned into a specific exercise and applied directly to the text, this means that each sentence or small group of sentences is characterised by a single active verb. For example, Frankie’s sentence “Not so bad, worse things happen at sea, think about it, what would have become of me otherwise” (Schimmelpfennig 2012, 3) could be characterised as his attempt to pacify Peter. This exercise proved to be problematic, since unlike dialogue, narration as present in this play is not a place where an “intentionale Situationsveränderung” [intentional change of a situation] takes place (Pfister 1977: 169, cp. chapter 1). In trying to action a narrative sentence, you thrust upon it relational aspects that are not present in the text. Narration is much more dominated by the character’s relationship to what he or she says than it is by any intentions to change the given situation.

In later rehearsals, we tried other ways of exploring the inner life of the characters that gives rise to their stories. When Peter talked about his belief that “women enjoy it [...] when you touch their breasts” (Schimmelpfennig: 12), I suggested that the actors tell the story as if he is facing death. I was hoping that this specific attitude would help the audience to see the character behind the story, and his motivations for sharing them with Frankie. However, the ‘magic if’ that assures that “*all action in the theatre [has] an inner justification, be*

logical coherent and real” and that “acts as a lever to lift us out of the world of actuality and into the realm of imagination” (Stanislavski 1980: 46, original emphasis) turned out to weigh down O’Grady’s delivery instead of enlivening it. His voice was pressed throughout; his motivation did nothing to expand the meaning of the text, but substituted it. The structure of the words, their material quality as well as their wit disappeared completely behind the character’s emotional subtext.

A description of another exercise that turned out to be unhelpful in rehearsing this theatrical realist text will demonstrate that this was not solely due to the possible missing connection of the attitude to the rest of the text. I tried to use Brigid Panet’s ‘Hidden Agenda’ exercise in another attempt to explore the psychological, dramatic realist aspects of *End and Beginning* and its characters. This exercise is specifically designed to practise subtext, “hidden behind words and actions” and sometimes even “unacknowledged by a character who may be unwilling to face his own true feelings” – note the assumption that the subtext can give access to ‘true’ feelings that is characteristic of dramatic realism (Panet 2009: 44). The exercise consisted of three stages. In the first stage, the two participating actors were asked to choose and execute a task together purely through actions. The second stage introduced speech in two parts: during the first part, the actors only talked about the task they are executing; in the second part, they only talked about something completely unconnected to the task. The third stage then introduced the hidden agenda. Both actors continued to work on their tasks and talk about a subject unrelated to their movements. At the same time, one of the actors had chosen their hidden agenda, something they wanted the other actor to do but could not tell him or her directly. The other actor’s task was to find out this

hidden agenda and act accordingly. The hidden agenda was therefore something that is expressed indirectly, through the way you moved and spoke.

This exercise worked as long as the text spoken was improvised. Once we tried it out with the playtext however, the demands of the text clashed with the demands of the hidden agenda. Since the text was narrative rather than dialogic and itself exteriorises subtext to a certain degree (cp. 'Subtext and the characters' self-narration' above), the way it was delivered is no longer only connected to the character's objectives in any given moment, but reflected the performer's attitude towards the narrated content, which is often temporally and/or spatially removed. Moreover, the hidden agenda was insufficient to connect spoken words and physical tasks. In the basic exercise, both aspects only served the expression of the hidden agenda, whereas their own signification remains relatively simple. With the introduction of a narrative text like *End and Beginning* however, the contrapuntal interplay between words and gesture started to open up fields of meaning that went beyond any single unified hidden agenda and thereby undermined the exclusive focus on a unified 'truth' of the characters' psychology that defines this exercise. As described earlier in this chapter, the texts of theatrical realism break the unity of gesture, speech, and subtext that characterises dramatic realism.

These failed attempts to investigate the text through psychological exercises revealed the strong independent position the words themselves occupy in the performance's process of meaning-making. There was no longer one unified subtext that could be distilled from the text and then used as a motivation for both speech and gesture. Instead, a range of possible gestus-subtexts arose in the act of speaking itself. Correspondingly, we turned from an

exploration of gesture that treated gestures as a function of subtext to one where they generated their own subtexts. The exercises that proved to be useful in rehearsing *End and Beginning* were often those that explored how seemingly purely exterior abstract gestures could give rise to interior emotions, thereby underlining Merleau-Ponty's concept of the 'in-betweenness' of the 'flesh' as both outside body and inside emotions. These exercises sat on the boundary between the psychological exercises described above and the more abstract exploration of metaphoric gestures discussed in the chapter at large.

One of these exercises that united theatrical and dramatic realism, which I already used for *Black Beast Sorrow*, was sculpting of the human body. In this exercise, the actors worked as pairs. One of them was the 'clay', the other one the 'sculptor'. The actor being sculpted stood in a relaxed, neutral pose and allowed the sculptor to change the position of his body and its extremities. There was no specific form the sculptor needs to achieve; once he or she was satisfied, they stepped back and examined their 'sculpture'. For *End and Beginning*, I extended this exercise: I instructed the actor serving as the 'clay' to keep his or her eyes closed throughout. Once the sculpting process was over, I asked the 'clay' to describe the feelings and associations their pose induced in them. This proved to be a very good starting exercise to demonstrate how interiority could be explored through gestures, and did not necessarily have to precede them. It also allowed the actors to realise how their attitude towards a situation (in this case a physical one) could become part of their performance of interiority. In another exercise, we worked on the characters' 'leading centre'. The actors walk around the space neutrally. I then asked them to explore different parts of the body that lead the character in his or her walk. This leading part was the furthestmost part of the actor's body in their walk – it was as if it

dragged along the rest of the body in its forward motion. Throughout our rehearsals, I encouraged the actors to experiment with different leading centres, even if they thought they had found one that felt right for the character. A character's leading centre and the variations around it then became the basis for their further psychological characterisation, but also strongly affected the nature of the metaphorical gestures we explored. For example, Brown worked with the right shoulder as the Girl's leading centre. This gave her walk a crouched, bowed-down quality expressing her illness and also related to the central metaphor of digging.

The central exercise to explore the shared territory between exteriority and interiority, between gesture and motivation was one based on Rudolf von Laban's work. He defines eight "Effort Actions" (Panet 2009: 241), each of them a pair of opposites in the three aspects of movement "Space, Time, and Force" (ibid: 241). Movements can be direct or indirect in relation to space, sudden or sustained in relation to time, and strong or light in relation to force. The eight Efforts describe all possible combinations from these three categories. We first explored physically each quality in isolation before combining them into an Effort. Subsequently, we extended the exploration of the Efforts to the vocal delivery of text. For example, O'Grady as Peter would tell his story about the girl in New Mexico (Schimmelpfennig 2012: 10) in a direct, sudden, and light way. In the next step, the effort expressed physically stands in opposition to the one expressed vocally: while Peter spoke the sentences as described above, thereby suggesting a casual, easy-going attitude towards the situation, his gestures were indirect, sustained, and strong and expressed doubt as well as a much greater emotional significance of the experience he had had with this girl. This Laban exercise is quite similar to the Hidden Agenda exercise described

earlier. However, it acknowledges speech and gesture as two separate but related levels of meaning by *physically* concretising their execution through its eight Efforts. It takes into consideration the performer's attitude or gestus towards words and gestures. Like the sculpting and leading centre exercises, it allows the actors to discover interiority 'from the outside in' through the physical execution of and experimentation with gestures and words. By putting the two in *opposition*, it acknowledges that they are not united by a common subtext.

In spite of the usefulness of these later non-psychological exercises, our final performances also demonstrated the validity of the insights concerning the necessity of psychological groundwork I had gained during *Black Beast Sorrow*. Since we did not spend enough time to explore the characters and their motivations, the first performance turned out to be too mechanical. The actors were primarily focused on remembering and executing the agreed on movements at the right time. Their textual delivery was therefore rather one-dimensional and did not allow the audience to glimpse a dimension of interiority beyond the interiority externalised and described in the text itself. Moreover, the metaphoric gesture in itself was in danger of just looking like a clever invention by the director imposed upon the text, if it was not 'owned' by the actors by connecting it to their characters' motivations. The metaphorical potential of a gesture only fully flourished if it was given emotional force by the actor. Only in the second performance did the actors feel secure enough to start exploring these psychological dimensions. Based on the overall experience during the *End and Beginning* project, I would now suggest that the exploration of metaphorical gestures is a second, separate step needing extra rehearsal time. It is properly situated in "pre-rehearsals" (cp. chapter 3). In trying to combine the work on metaphorical gestures with the investigation of the characters, I was

rushing things and asked too much of the actors. Unlike the rehearsals in dramatic realism, where gestures and text can be explored together since they are linked by a common subtext, rehearsals in theatrical realism work with gesture and text as two independent levels of creating meaning. Actors first need to investigate the fictional world(s) and their characters before they can engage with the text itself as an expression of their attitude towards them. It therefore seems necessary to structure the rehearsal process into separate steps, each closely focused on one aspect: character, textual delivery, and metaphoric gestures. Only then is it possible to combine them effectively into a counterpoint movement.

Narration as communication with the audience

Narration cannot only be linked to the development of relationship between the characters – it also creates a unique bond between characters and audience. In the verbalising of their thoughts and feelings, the characters not only addressed the other characters in a way they could not adopt in the dialogic flow of the action, but they also created a relationship to the audience. We became the direct addressees of their narration, and therefore complicit partners in their secrets. It was important to remind the students of this during rehearsals, since I perceived a tendency to narrate passages without directing it to anyone in particular. Moreover, I observed in both rehearsal processes the danger of the tone of narration becoming monotonous and one-dimensional. Due to the observational distance present in all narration, the actors often settled on a single point of view that influenced their attitude towards the whole segment of narration. In doing so, the narration lost its drive, its impact, and turned into

empty verbiage. Instead, what is required is a reliving of the incidents narrated in the *here and now*. Even more so than dialogue, narration necessitated a “Allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden” [gradual formation of thoughts in the process of speech] (Kleist 1998: 25). I have come to realise the need to develop exercises that allow the actor to develop this faculty, especially if they come from a more dialogue-based dramatic realist tradition.

In *Black Beast Sorrow*, the figure of the narrator (Millward) in particular had to keep this in mind during the performance. Since she stood outside the action on stage, the temptation was great to remain isolated in her own spot. Instead, the narrator needed to reach out through the microphone to the characters and images on stage she was describing. When she claimed that “*Paul is big*” (Hilling 2009b: 7), this was not a neutral statement in our production: she ridiculed Paul and implied through the use of the euphemism that he is fat. In doing so, she connected to Paul and also to Jennifer, who entered into an oppositional relationship through correcting the narrator: “*he looks strong, immovable*” (ibid: 7). Even more than the characters, the narrator needed to establish a relationship with the audience; she was the embodied connection between their world and the fictional world represented on stage.

Fascinatingly, the microphone is an instrument with the capacity to create both distance and intimacy between narrator and audience. We explored this in particular in *Black Beast Sorrow*, whereas we worked without a microphone in *End and Beginning*, again due to the absence of a dedicated narrator and the greater emphasis on the relationship between metaphorical gesture and text in the latter project. As a technical device, the microphone intervened between the narrator’s and the audience’s body: it separated her voice from her body to deliver it to the audience relatively purely. On the other hand, the microphone’s

amplification emphasised the grain of the voice: the little bodily sounds and inflections, the warmth and colouring that accompanied the pure ‘mechanical’ enunciation of the words. Similar to the effect of physical strain on the voice described above, the microphone changed the traditional theatrical voice of the actor into the voice of a storyteller, where the phatic aspect (directed towards the audience) became more important than the emotive and conative aspects usually emphasised by an actor performing a character.⁵³ In relation to this intimate communication between narrator and audience as situated in the voice, Barthes states that

something is there, manifest and stubborn (one hears only *that*), beyond (or before) the meaning of words [...]: something which is directly the cantor’s body [...] as though a single skin lined the inner flesh of the performer and the music he sings (Barthes 1977: 181)

His metaphor of a “single skin” becomes extremely potent if we relate it to Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the ‘flesh’ as analyzed in the section on interiority (chapter 1). The grain of the narrator’s voice as intensified and brought closer by the microphone then becomes the phenomenological space of inbetweenness, folded in on itself, which connects the spectator’s interiority to that of the narrator and her world.

In this production, through the use of the microphone, the actor’s body was simultaneously present and not present; it coloured the text and remained

⁵³ Cp. Roman Jakobson’s six communication functions: referential (contextual information), aesthetic (auto-reflexion), emotive (self-expression), conative (vocative or imperative addressing of receiver), phatic (checking that channel is working), metalingual (checking that code is working).

separate from it. Heiner Goebbels emphasises this doubling of interpretative levels:

auf der Bühne versuche ich, die Identität zwischen Sprache und Sprechendem zu irritieren, bzw. zu spalten, [...] um einen Schauspieler zu gewinnen, der nicht nur verdoppelt, was er ohnehin schon sagt, sondern auch als Körper autonom sich darstellen kann: um letzten Endes zwei Körper zu haben, den Text als Körper und den Körper des Schauspielers.

[on stage I try to unsettle or split the identity of language and speaker [...] in order to arrive at an actor who does not merely duplicate what he says anyway, but is able to present himself autonomously as a body: ultimately, to have two bodies, the text as body and the actor's body.]

(Goebbels 1996)

It felt to the audience as if this voice spoke directly into their ears. A well-performed narration through the microphone taking these intimate effects into consideration can enter into a very personal dialogue with the audience, to the extent that the images of the characters' interiority it creates seem to arise from within the spectator's own person:

Die vom Körper abgetrennte Stimme, die Zeit und Raum souverän hinter sich lässt, appelliert noch immer an das zuhörende Subjekt, jetzt allerdings unter gänzlich veränderten Interaktionsbedingungen. Damit eröffnen sich völlig neue Verbindungen von Intimität *und* Öffentlichkeit, von Nähe *und* Distanz, von emotionaler Intensität *und* Reflexion.

[The voice that is severed from the body and that magisterially leaves behind time and space still appeals to the listening subject, but under completely different conditions of interaction. It thereby opens up completely new connections between intimacy *and* openness, proximity

and distance, emotional intensity *and* reflection.] (Kolesch and Schrödl 2004: 26)

Narration with the use of a microphone can thus ‘insert’ the interior worlds of characters directly into the minds and hearts of its audience.

What our rehearsals for *Black Beast Sorrow* and *End and Beginning* demonstrated most clearly is the way in which the techniques of dramatic realism (such as the performer’s identification with the character) and the techniques of theatrical realism (for example the creation of distance, the stepping out of character to comment on it) could reinforce each other, if combined in the right way. The plays, as examples of Poschmann’s “hybrids”, consciously blur the boundaries between the dramatic forms. We have seen in my practical investigation of possible approaches to these plays that their formal textual diversity invites a corresponding performative diversity. Rehearsals have therefore confirmed Höfele’s concept of “das dem Damentext eingeschriebene Potential theatraler Wirkungen” [the potential of theatrical effects inscribed in the dramatic text] (Höfele 1991: 19): not all exercises proved to be effective in bringing out the specific textual theatricality of narration. In a performance, the actors need a proficiency in acting techniques from both a more psychological-emotional and a performative-abstract angle, which implies a great versatility on the part of the performer. Rehearsals for these hybrid plays would need to focus on the strengthening of this versatility, especially through exercises that allow the performers to develop the capacity to quickly change between one approach and the other. Another theoretical consideration strengthened by the practical investigations of this chapter is the interconnection between metonymic and metaphorical modes of representation. It had already emerged in my observations in chapter 3 that metaphorical gestures combine surprise

and satisfaction particularly well if they arise fluidly from the metonymic context and vice versa. In chapter 4, I have looked my closely at how this fluid blend can be achieved in composition and rehearsals. The importance of an element of probability (as defined by the fictional world(s) of the performance) in the development of moments of potentiality became clear in this context. Overall, my practical rehearsal investigation demonstrated the possibility of fusing a more British-oriented acting tradition with a more German-language-oriented one.

Conclusion: A new hybridity?

I have discovered in the course of my thesis that one of the key concepts when investigating contemporary British and German-language theatre and their possible influences on each other is that of hybridity. Firstly, the playtexts, be they dramatic realist or theatrical realist, often consciously combine dramatic and postdramatic stylistic elements. Narration and dialogue exist side by side and thereby throw their respective forms of representing worlds into greater relief. Due to the dialectical relationship between text and performance, this is also the case for the gestural languages most strongly aligned with narration and dialogue. Metaphorical gestures and metonymic gestures can overlap and shade into each other. Moreover, a performance defined by a metaphorical approach to gestures can integrate metonymic gestures and *show them as such*; it treats the structured metonymic connection between interiority and exteriority as one possible mode of representation. The, hierarchical model of reality of dialogue and metonymy is kept functional within certain boundaries, but is contrasted with other possible worlds in the larger theatricalist framework of the performance. Dramatic realism can also accommodate metaphorical gestures, which are then operative *within* the fictional framework. It can also include references to aspects outside this framework without invalidating its proposed model of reality.

This openness of the metaphorical mode of representation for the metonymic mode and vice versa is promising, since it indicates that German-language plays and their performances can coexist with British plays and performances, without one mode replacing the other. Overall, the combination of dramatic and theatrical realism in texts, translations, and performances

therefore leads to a greater variety of form in the representation of worlds on stage. Indeed, my analysis of Simon Stephen's texts, my investigation of Sean Holmes' development as a director and my rehearsal observations of *Three Kingdoms* have brought out the already existing web of cultural cross-influences between the German-speaking countries and Britain. The writing of challenging German-language playtexts has turned out to be very much alive in its continuing investigation of form and its combination of dramatic and postdramatic elements, in spite of still commonly heard complaints about the dearth of new writing in the German-speaking countries, for example, in Michael Billington's article 'Don't mention the phwoar [sic]: the future of German theatre' (cp. Billington 2011). My observations have shown that even if the final product is considered successful, which *Three Kingdoms* was overall, the intercultural process can be difficult and fraught with misunderstanding. Perhaps the ability of the final performance to elucidate the complex interconnections of intercultural exchange is as much influenced by this confrontation of different practices as it is by their seamless integration.

One of the most crucial areas for the negotiation of formal textual hybridity on stage is the continuum between character and performer. The more practically oriented investigations of chapter 3 and 4 have revealed the necessity for a conscious investigation of the possible combinations of different approaches to character when dealing with texts that include both narration and dialogue. These approaches range between a distanced attitude that highlights the presence of the performer and a more psychological approach which attempts to conceal the presence of the performer behind the detailed construction of a character. The definition of the relationship between character and performer that is seen as desirable for a specific production is crucial for

the development of a common understanding of rehearsal methodologies such as improvisation.

In my own practice, I discovered that the creation of such a hybrid between British and German-language rehearsal methodologies is indeed possible. The rehearsal observations of chapter 3 had shown that a certain level of hybridity already existed and could be developed further. Therefore, I adapted existing exercises and invented new ones in response to the formal demands of the texts, and was able to further integrate a British individual and subjective focus with German-language experimental direction. The resulting performances were themselves hybrids in which the actors developed psychologically coherent characters with a complex interiority and simultaneously adapted methods of defamiliarisation and distancing to open up different points of view and potentialities for the audience's interpretation. In highlighting the deep interconnectedness between textual form and performative form, I hope to increase the consideration of this aspect when transposing plays into a different culture. It is not enough to recognise the differences of the texts, but one has to be aware of the performative strategies used to answer to these textual features in the country of origin, even if one chooses to adapt, change, or partly dismiss them. The introduction of a pre-rehearsal period in which actors and the creative team familiarise themselves with these methodologies is artistically desirable, even though I am aware of the economic and institutional difficulties of such an extension of rehearsal time.

My collaborative translation practice similarly displayed how the juxtaposition of methodologies which attempt to bring a play closer to the target culture with ones which highlight its differences can inform each other. The

disruption of character and of its fluid, speakable language does not have to negate it completely. Instead it displays the formal ingenuities of construction inherent to this mode of representation. In this way, dramatic realist and theatrical realist methodologies come to enrich each other. I therefore hope that my investigations can contribute to a nuanced, complex approach to realism as a form of representation which is also processual in its construction of a model of reality. This model creates similarities that can be both established as norms and surprising as new suggestions.

I hope that my theoretical and practical investigations have outlined possible ways of combining British and German-language theatre traditions, thereby deconstructing the notion “that the theatre in Britain and Germany is fundamentally different and incompatible” (Heinrich 2007: 2). By raising an awareness of the use of narration in German-language playtexts and this narration’s corresponding demand for a freer, more metaphorical staging that traces the non-verbal elements as a contrapuntal ‘track’ to the text, I hope to encourage a greater number of British productions of these plays. Such productions should be based on a better practical understanding of the staging requirements arising from their specific forms, which would prevent attempts to shoehorn theatrical realist texts into a dramatic realist performance language. The distinction between new writing and new work that still exists in Great Britain becomes problematic with regards to the staging of German-language playtexts, because their use of narration necessitates a ‘devising with text’. There have already been a number of important stagings of contemporary German-language plays in the past, and an examination of their approaches to issues of translation and staging as well as of their reception would complement my own analysis of these texts.

My thesis also raises several other areas for further research. The impact of co-productions, invitations of productions from the other country, and other forms of exchange on each theatrical language could be one focus for such an investigation. We have seen in the cases of Simon Stephens and Sean Holmes that German-language theatrical realism has already influenced contemporary British practices. Especially visiting productions present a particular case in the way their reception often mixes a fascination with and a simultaneous distancing from the so-perceived Other, yet they lie outside the remit of my research. Another area of investigation is a comparative historical account of the development of the role of the director in Great Britain and the German-speaking countries. My focus on contemporary directors could be the beginning for such a comparison, which could draw for example on available courses, guidebooks for directors, interviews with directors, and rehearsal observations from both countries. Alongside the study of directorial practice, a similar study of acting methodologies in both countries would be desirable. A comparison of the training courses and their philosophies available in both countries would be a particularly promising starting point. Overall, my thesis as well as any further research it might encourage acknowledge the rich potential for exchange between British and German-language theatre. It honours their differences as a site of creative power, indicates already existing and often neglected areas of exchange, and therefore lays the groundwork for increased communication and interaction.

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